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The Pacific Journal of Theology

Journal of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS)

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Aisake Casimira

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Editorial

One of the questions often asked in theological debates is “How does one relate to God in the Pacific?” To some extent, the question indicates a search for a meaningful way of relating to God - a God who once lived in a specific place and time and subject to all human conditions and yet is present in the Pacific. Moreover, the question brings into focus the polarisation of the historical Jesus and the risen Christ, which is a dilemma in constructing Pacific theologies. The close allegiance the Historical Mainline Churches have with the culture and/or state on the one hand and the rapid growth of new religious movements on the other symbolically highlights this. The polarisation gives rise to tensions in royalties (rightly or wrongly) and for many Pacific Christians the painful question is, “how do we remain faithful to the historical Jesus and at the same time faithful to the risen Christ?” There is an assumed discontinuity between the two realities, which should not be. Moreover, the Bible is clear on the fact there is simply no separation but continuity.

To this extent, Sandy Yule’s address to the Tongan contextual seminar has some very important observations for Pacific theologians. Citing Ilaitia Tuwere’s position on the subject, he affirms that “contextualisation” is indeed a



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part of every theology. This is simply because the incarnation is an historical event and hence subject to temporary, human conditions. At the same time and again citing Tuwere, he notes that the construction of Pacific theologies must always bear in mind that the Gospel must be faithfully received and imparted and not a kind that is a construction of one's mind. In this respect, contextual theology needs to and must always have Jesus the man from Nazareth and his message at the centre of its construction.

Hence, the relevancy of the questions he poses in regard to constructing Pacific theologies: "Are the basic elements of the theology and the way that they are put together faithful to the task of presenting Christ?" and "Has Jesus disappeared behind the particular cultural face in which he is being presented?" These are challenging questions and yet one feels that perhaps Pacific theologies need to consider these seriously in light of the context in which the Churches operate in the Pacific: security and comfort in the past and the domestication of the Gospel if engaged with the world. Further on, he states that the "aim of contextual theology should not be the articulation of cultural differences but the enrichment of our shared life and community of faith..." and "local theologies are meant to aid us in common understanding, not just of the reality of our own context but more importantly, what God is doing with us and our context."

After discussing the various models in contextual theology, he makes some observations regarding contextual theology in light of Stephen Bevan's various approaches: (1) contextual approaches to theology should not aim at achieving a complete system, (2) theology is not an end in itself but should contribute to the teaching of the Church, (3) as context changes, theologies need to take new and fresh openings. As a word of warning, he notes that "when we believe that where we are now is already fully faithful to the gospel, we are unlikely to see any need for a fresh departure." By re-telling an Australian aboriginal story towards the end of his article, he indirectly questions the validity of current Pacific theologies' basic premise – the "Pacific Christ". This is also a major point of critique, among many others, that Ma'afu



‘Otu’itonga Palu highlights in his article.

In the introductory notes, Ma’afu Palu, while acknowledging the wealth of Pacific theologies that are existing and the works of their authors, he makes the point that real theologies need to be open to criticism, a point that Sandy Yule highlights in (2) above. This is healthy, because theologising is a never-ending process; we construct and deconstruct again and again as our context changes as new generations and authors co-authors of history enter the picture. For as long as a theology is open-ended and not complete, it is open to growth and newness. Ma’afu Palu also, at the outset, points out that Pacific theologies, at the most, are impractical for many reasons. Some of which include: (1) that most Pacific theologies while trying to construct theologies that are culturally sensitive and coherent, they do not resonate with the faith experience of people, and, (2) they depart from the central focus – the person of Jesus – and hence tend to become a purely anthropocentric. The danger in the latter is the tendency to promote a Christianity that is without God. The rest of the article he dedicated to what he sees as the fundamental flaws of current Pacific contextual theologies.

The first major flaw he identifies in his critique of current Pacific contextual theologies is their basic presupposition - the “Pacific Christ” (first articulated by Dr. Sione ‘Amanaki Havea in 1986). There are various reasons presented in his scholarly critique, some of which overlap.

■ He sees a huge difference between the historical Jesus and the Pacific Christ. The difference is ontological. This refers to the historical data – the historical Jesus underwent suffering and was crucified in a specific context whereas the Pacific Christ did not. Hence, what he sees in Pacific theologies is the tendency to “theologise” rather than be concerned about “saving”. If the “Pacific Christ” is the basic presupposition of Pacific theologies, then there is an assumption of discontinuity between the historical Jesus and the risen Christ, which is contradictory to the Gospel experience.

■ He sees that the basic presupposition in Pacific theologies assumes the presence of Jesus in the Pacific before the arrival of Christianity.

This assumption subjects Pacific theologies to be more identified with the Docetism heresy (an abstract idea of God). Hence, what we have in the Pacific is an idea of God and what the missionaries brought to the Pacific is an “appearance or an embodiment of an idea that already exists”. In other words, the Gospel that the missionaries brought only “enfleshes” an already existing idea. To this extent, it nullifies the historical Jesus, the incarnation and the crucifixion. It also rules out the experiential encounters with God in history.

■ In relation to the above, he sees the emphasis on culture as the medium by which Pacific people could legitimately have a meaningful experience of God is really a “mythologisation” of the historical Jesus. The danger in such an approach is the reduction of Jesus to a Pacific myth, clothed with its myths and legends. Hence, the concept of the “Pacific Christ” is just that - a figment of our imagination, a recreation of Jesus in our own image rather than a recreation of us into his image. In this sense, Pacific theologies are in danger of creating Jesus’ identity to whatever we make him to be.

■ He sees the current methodology employed in the construction of Pacific theologies, which is premised on the “Pacific Christ” presupposition, as unscientific. This is because it detached Jesus from its historical and Gospel roots. Jesus was born into a particular culture, time and space. In other words, he was born into a specific context and hence, one can only understand Jesus in his historical context. He asserts in this regard that one does not have the freedom to treat Jesus as a timeless truth.

■ He sees current Pacific theologies, while genuinely attempt to be historical, do not necessarily subject Jesus to temporary conditions. The Gospel is about a person who is rooted in a specific historical context and subject to all human conditions. Yet Pacific theologising is about a Jesus that is withering and unrecognisable. In the end, the major weakness is that Pacific theologies are really speaking about us rather than about the person of Jesus. The crucial question for him, is “what is the meaning of the Scriptures... to us in the Pacific today?” and not “What if Christ was born a Pacific Islander?”



The second flaw he sees is that current Pacific theologies is promoting “a gospel which is no gospel at all”

■ Human experience of God and speaking about God are not the same thing but the distinction is often confused in the construction of Pacific theologies. He went on to assert that in this case Pacific theologies simply do not, in reality, speak about God. They are more interested in Christian faith rather than the Christian message. Humanity’s relationship with God becomes more important than God’s relationship with them. It is a theology from below rather than from above; from humanity rather than the person of Jesus, which as he says, should be the proper subject of Christian theology. Hence, such theologies remain anthropocentric if they continue to be rooted in the “Pacific Christ” presupposition.

At the same time, Ma’afu Palu’s critique of current Pacific theologies is made in light of the view that real and genuine theologies are open to growth and not at all complete. While his critique may seem to negate the work done so far, it is however, a genuine attempt to positively contribute to an on-going process of theological construction (or reconstruction).

His main point is that the man from Nazareth must always remain the centre of any theological enterprise, a point highlighted by both Sandy Yule and Ilaitia Tuwere. The added dimension is that the process of theologising must also pay serious attention to God’s relationship with humanity rather than our relationship with God. It is what God is saying and doing in our context. It is within this framework, that Pacific theologies’ search for a meaningful way of speaking about and of God can become clearer and not confused and their response is faithful. For what purpose if in constructing Pacific theologies, God is marginalised and instead, culture is centralised and perhaps idolised? Should Pacific theologising be about God speaking and relating to us rather than us speaking and relating to God? These are important questions as Pacific Christians try to speak coherently and meaningfully about God and of God.

Such questions bring up the point about intermediaries. For if theologising is about being an intermediary process then it is assumed that the primary participants are God and people and the subject is God's relationship and what he/she is saying to and doing with us. This brings up a further issue, which is, how do professional theologians as intermediaries, speak about and of God? At what point do they stop speaking about God and let God speak? The danger that Pacific theologies face in this regard, is when its theologising becomes one of "masking" rather than "transforming" and allowing newness to emerge. In this regard, Pacific theologising either becomes a purely cultural or anthropological process of legitimisation. In other words, Pacific theologising becomes a tool for justifying everything and anything that suits our purposes or ends.

One of the aims of contextual theology, mentioned by Sandy Yule is that "local theologies are meant to aid us in common understanding... more importantly, what God is doing with us and our context." A point that Palu highlights above. Seleuni 'Akau'ola in his article "Ethical and Theological Issues Involved" in addressing HIV/AIDS starts attempts to discern what God is saying to us in the Pacific in order for us to meaningfully respond HIV/AIDS. By briefly outlining the statistical situation of HIV/AIDS in the world and the region, he placed the issue in context and asked some very important questions: "Where is God in the midst of this human tragedy?", "What is God asking of us through this human experience?" and, "What is our response as Church and as theological institutions to this life threatening epidemic?"

His attempt to shed light on these questions begins with the source of our dignity as human beings; our human dignity is rooted in the image and likeness of God. Moreover, any response to these questions must not be isolated from its biblical and historical roots - namely Jesus' mission to preach the kingdom of God, a mandate that he left with us. In this regard, preaching the kingdom message, which is Jesus, necessarily involves its challenges to all aspects of our lives. The issue of HIV/AIDS is also included.



Because human beings are made in the image and likeness, they have dignity and ensuing human rights. He puts the issue in the context of the international human rights framework and asks the question that if such is the source of human rights, the Church has the responsibility to promote it. He draws the parallels between the Universal declaration on human rights and the teachings of the Catholic Church of which he is a member. Citing Bryan Hehir, he highlighted four guiding principles for the Church's interaction with the socio-political order. These have political significant goals: "the defence of human dignity; the promotion of human rights; the cultivation of the unity of the human family; the provision of meaning to every aspect of human activity."

He then move on to the area of HIV/AIDS and human dignity and rights. He distinguished two, but mutually linked, kinds of human dignity; one is inalienable and the one which, as a result of the gift of free choice, we must constantly seek to acquire. To put it simply, the latter means the continual search to be fully human. He argues that this deep understanding of human dignity "calls forth compassion and solidarity". HIV/AIDS, therefore, needs to be understood within this framework of dignity and rights. As he notes, people with HIV/AIDS "cannot lose their dignity as human beings or their basic human rights simply because they suffer from such tragic disease. Their dignity and rights remain intact despite the disease."

He then moves on to briefly treat HIV/AIDS and human sexuality and marriage. He first outlined the weaknesses of current secular approaches to combating the deadly disease and points that these approaches need to encourage sexual integration and the living of good moral life. In it, he affirms some guidelines for a Christian response to the issue.

- Intimacy is a human need and it must be adequately addressed and met.
- The need to encourage sexual integration into the personality of the human person.
- That we should not lose sight of the true meaning of the human.

person as an integrated person.

In concluding his article, he points out that we need to steer away from seeing HIV/AIDS as a punishment for the sin of sexual promiscuity. The Gospel warns us not to make any distinction between merited and unmerited suffering. The main point however, is that the mission and the demands of God's kingdom require us to defend and promote the dignity of the human person, simply because we must defend the image and likeness of God in us.

As Pacific contextual theologies continues to wrestle with how to meaningfully about and of God in their context, which includes issues such as HIV/AIDS, there is also the pertinent issue that is having a rapid impact in the Pacific. Science is one factor that underpins social change in the Pacific region both in terms of worldviews and socio-political interaction.

Ama'amalele Tofaeono, in his article, reports on the dialogue between religion and science in the post-modernity context. In his introduction, he notes that major discoveries and experiments in science in recent years, promise hope on the one hand and cause confusion and disorientation of human beings on the other. Such scientific developments, he says, need to be "... met with significant guidelines and paradigmatic shifts in convictions and orientations, particularly in terms of our human search for Truth." His succinct summaries of the papers presented at the two workshops give us insights into the process of dialogue between religions and science; the areas of convergence and the areas of differences. Yet, the process, as he says, is mutually beneficial, given a history of suspicion and mistrust between the two disciplines.

His excellent summaries touch on topics such as "Creation and complexity", "Truth in science, Truth in religion", "Truth in Religious Abstractions", "and Truths in Empirical Science". Papers are presented under these thematic areas. The aim of the two workshops is to build dialogue with the hope that "a reconciliatory process between Theology and Science could enrich each discipline's faith in the holistic process of



life.” Some of the issues he highlights include the following:

■ There is mutual consensus that we “live in an orderly, beautiful, purposeful, complex and unified creation”. As he explains, while there is unity in creation, there is a “multi-dimensional plurality” that needs to be “recognised and respected”.

■ There are various approaches to the origin of the cosmos or universe and the significant place of human beings in it. These are clearly summarised under the heading “Creation and Complexity”.

■ There seems to be an understanding that there is “intelligibility” in the laws of the cosmos, which he says, “reinstates the fact that the cosmos has a purpose”.

■ Despite the reliance on scientific “proofs”, there is always uncertainty in science.

■ There seem to be a limitation on how far science can go. This is assertion is made in light of the possibility of the cosmos coming to an end which science does not seem to have answers and hence the question: “what shall Theology say about this?” In this regard, the Christian understanding of the resurrection, eschatology (hope) and the need to articulate a creation theology that also focuses on the end times become very relevant in the dialogue.

■ New generation of scientists, new discoveries and experiments also impact profoundly on fundamental religious beliefs. This relates to the issue of context and its changing facets.

■ Major religions do not deny science but see it as useful in as far as it contributes to humanity’s search of the Truth.

■ There is recognition and respect for each of the discipline’s truth claims, while holding firm to their own beliefs.

In his conclusion, he stresses the need for the Pacific, especially theological institutions, to seek such dialogue because of the hope it offers to the development of Christian faith, and because of its pertinence to the

Pacific context.

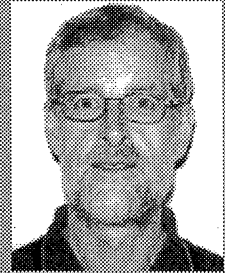
It seems that the common thread is the issue of God's relationship with creation and with humanity in particular, and humanity's search for the truth. The complexities in both reality and theory reveal something of the presence and absence of God and, in that sense, the reality of God cannot be fully comprehended. Perhaps, it is something that we should not attempt to comprehend at all, for as Ama'amalele notes: "In this process [dialogue and interaction between science and religion] there is a continued desire to experience the mystery or the silence before something awe-full and great." In theologising, as the authors consistently outlined above, we need to allow God to speak about and of himself/herself. Our task then, in the theologising process is to discern, often in silence, what God is saying and doing in our context. As Sandy Yule points out, this is a difficult task but one that is possible with the help of the Spirit. If this is done honestly and courageously, it will drive us to respond with newness; a newness that is born of and sustained by the Spirit.

Given the wealth of knowledge and experience contained in the articles, it is hoped that the editorial has done some justice to their authors. Lastly, the articles published in this issue are indeed thought provoking. They are well researched and scholarly presented, and are valuable resources for theological students.



What is Contextual Theology?

*A Paper Presented to the SPATS Sub-Regional Workshop
(Tonga) on Contextual Theology*



Rev. Dr. Sandy Yule

Rev. Dr. Sandy Yule is presently the Acting Dean at the Uniting Church Theological Hall, Melbourne. He served for two years (2000-2002) as Academic Dean at the Sia'atoutai Theological College in Tonga where he was also a Lecturer in Systematic Theology from 1997-2002. He has been a Minister of the Uniting Church in Australia since 1970. He published WSCF Book No. 14, 'Making Peace, Making Sense' (WSCF Asia/Pacific Office, Hong Kong, 1988)

It is a privilege and a surprise for me to be presenting these reflections on **What is Contextual Theology?** at this workshop. In the matter of context, I prefer to say that I sit in two contexts rather than that I am between two contexts. I am not leaving my Australian context behind by coming to work in Tonga. I am all too aware of the countless ways in which I bring my Australian cultural identity and experience with me. It is also true that I am not seeking to cease being Australian and working at becoming Tongan, were that possible. I therefore prefer to say that I present these reflections as an Australian who has been privileged to teach Theology in Tonga for over five years and who has been immeasurably enriched by this experience.

The aim of this workshop is to contribute to the formulation of Pacific Theology or Theologies which will be owned and valued by the churches of the Pacific. I need to begin by acknowledging that I cannot contribute directly to this task because I am not an insider to the Pacific context. Also, my paper is in English, due to my lack of understanding of the Tongan language, which I regret. I offer this paper as a Welcome Mat at the front door of the house of Pacific Theology. My aim is to

encourage people to enter this house, to discover what it already contains and to add to the work in progress as they are able.

This raises the general question of how outsiders can assist in the development of contextual theologies. Stephen Bevans¹ suggests three partial and indirect ways in which outsiders can assist. They can join the conversation and participate up to a point, though it will always be for insiders to have the definitive word. They can see things that may be in the 'cultural blind spot' for insiders, raising fresh issues for consideration by insiders. Simply by being different, they can help insiders gain a clearer sense of their own specific identity. I expect to contribute to the present task mainly in the first way, as I am not aware of any prophetic challenges that I need to offer you and I don't have a choice about being different.

I understand my task in this paper to be that of giving a general orientation to the main topic of this workshop, which is Contextual Theology for Tonga. Actually, this task has already been done quite admirably by the Rev. Dr. Ilaitia Tuwera in his article for the SPATS workshop in Fiji on this topic². Dr. Tuwera identifies the term 'contextualisation' as a newcomer to theological language, emerging in the 1960's from the desire of a number of churches for a 'relevant living theology'.³ He points to various forms of liberation theology as examples which show the contemporary power and relevance of this approach. He points out that other general words are less adequate. 'Indigenisation' moves too much in terms of the past forms of culture. 'Adaptation' and 'accommodation' give unwarranted authority to whatever form of the gospel happens to have been brought to a place. There is need for fresh work in articulating the reality of God in the life and experience of the people of a given community. I find that I am also in full agreement with Dr. Tuwera in seeing the contextual dimension of theology as an aspect of all works of theology, whether they acknowledge this dimension or not.

Theology essentially is human construction or reflection as distinguished from divine revelation. It is an engagement where one is invited to faithfully speak about God on the one hand and really speak about Him on the other. And the God, about whom we speak in theological



discourse, is none other than Him who in freedom manifested Himself in Jesus Christ as attested to us through Holy Scriptures. Human speech about Him is grounded in man's apprehension and experience. And these apprehensions and experiences do not take place in vacuum. They are not purely matters of metaphysical speculation and philosophical reflection. They take place at concrete and particular moments in concrete and particular contexts.⁴

This statement makes it clear that all theology is affected by the context brought to that task by the theologian. This is true for theologies both Christian and non-Christian. Our speech about (and to) God is inevitably based upon our limited human experience and will show the influence, in some way or another, of the context which has formed the limitations as well as the experience itself. God is one (in three persons, as we Christians should be quick to add) and also universal, everywhere self-identical. Yet human experience of God is many – and theologies are based in that diversity of experience. Yet Tuwere does not leave us with a chaos of competing voices in theological discourse. In addition to the essential oneness of God, there is the unrepeatable uniqueness of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. This unifying focus, among Christians, is what assists the ongoing conversation and agreement between the many voices and many emphases of different theological presentations.

Dr. Tuwere quotes the late Lesslie Newbigin approvingly to say that there is no Christian gospel that is not expressed in culturally conditioned forms. This is as it should be for a faith which focuses on the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Every interpretation of the gospel is embodied in some cultural form. Culture shapes the voice that answers the voice of Christ. For this reason every theological reflection is contextual. It is shaped by the social milieu of a given culture and period of time. Having said that, it must be pointed out that what comes home to the hearer must really be the Gospel and not a product shaped by the mind of the bearer or the hearer. The text or gospel is not a general principle but the man from Nazareth or the historical Jesus. He is the subject and must remain so in

every theological construction.⁵

This means that every theology, particularly every contextual theology, must be open to critical inspection. Are the basic elements of the theology and the way that they are put together faithful to the task of presenting Christ? Has Jesus disappeared behind the particular cultural face in which he is being presented? These will not be easy questions to answer. From the nature of the case, there will be different perceptions of these matters. Yet we should not reject the whole enterprise because of the possibility of losing our way. There is a very real danger that we can fail to bring the gospel to people through failing to make the effort to find new, culturally appropriate ways of expressing it.

The church can fail by failing to understand and take seriously the world in which it is set so that the gospel is not heard or difficult to understand because the church continues to seek security in its own past, afraid to enter into the territory of the unfamiliar to be engaged in the issues of the world.

It can also fail by allowing the world to dictate the issues and the terms of the encounter. Consequently the world is not challenged at its depth but rather absorbs and domesticates the gospel and uses it to make sacred its own position and purpose. True and authentic contextualisation happens when the gospel is given its rightful primacy, its authority and power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture the Word which is both NO and YES, hate and love, judgement and grace.⁶

This is all important, and well said. The basic theological idea here is that of the incarnation of the Word of God. We can perhaps fill out this picture a little more by remembering the role of the Holy Spirit in creation and with Christ in redemption. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life.⁷ It seems to me that where the gospel becomes domesticated by a culture, the Holy Spirit is quenched. Where the gospel recovers its power to challenge and also confirm aspects of culture, the Holy Spirit gives the power. The Holy Spirit is not separate from Christ, but makes present to us the things of Christ. Concern about culture dominating and domesticating the gospel should therefore be rephrased



in terms of the danger of culture resisting and quenching the Holy Spirit through the unbroken pride and self-affirmation of the culture. When we phrase the matter this way, we can see that this can happen within a Christian as well as a non-Christian culture, or even within the culture of the Christian church itself.

Dr. Tuwere asks about our starting point for contextual theologising. He notes that some people call for a beginning with the aspirations of the people, but he prefers to start and finish with what God has already done in Jesus Christ⁸. I think his judgement here is sound, as it is all too easy to find that the world has indeed set the agenda to the detriment of the gospel when we begin with 'the people'. It can be awkward to have to introduce God into a discussion that is already well-launched without God. If we are to start with something close to us rather than from traditional Christian teaching, I would recommend that we attend to the suffering of people around us before we look to their aspirations. I do not doubt that the Holy Spirit is active in the aspirations of the people, but this can be difficult to discern, particularly when the aspirations are one-sided and careless of others. It is in deep suffering that we find ourselves drawn close to Christ on the cross. Christ's solidarity with the suffering victims of history seems to me an inexhaustible source of pastoral and theological relevance. We should not doubt that the God whom we meet in the biblical witness will fairly quickly lead us to recognise and care for the suffering people. Even so, I think I can confirm from my own experience that it is not so easy to move beyond one's own community of suffering or from a socio-political set of abstractions, when our theologising starts from the aspirations of the people – or even their present suffering – rather than from God. It is true that God is omnipresent, present in every context. Yet we do not know how to discern the presence of God reliably unless we have the assistance of the Holy Spirit and the witness of God's self-revelation.

I believe that this discussion has established that contextual theology can be seen to refer to a dimension of all theology, that of the context of the theologian (s). All theologies have a contextual dimension, but

not all theologies explicitly recognise and acknowledge this. I conclude that contextual theologies are those theologies which include their contextual dimension within the substance of their theological reflections. Contextual theologies are self-aware in this dimension of the work.

The second half of Dr. Tuwere's paper offers some substantive ideas for theologising in the context of Oceania. I prefer to leave it to insiders to offer critical comment on this aspect of his paper, beyond saying that I think it would be a pity to allow the Pacific name to be given over into the keeping of Pacific rim nations. There is certainly room for the use of the 'Oceania' name for the geographically 'mid-ocean' cultural context, but there is need for making fruitful the peace-making potential of the Pacific name, as well as issues of longstanding use and identity. Instead, let me reflect further on what we have so far established about our topic, Contextual Theology.

The original impetus for contextual work in theology arose from the discomfort of non-western churches and theologians with the assumption that western theologies could simply be sufficient for them. I think it is important to note, as a sign of the perceived value and success of contextual theologies produced in non-western contexts, that western theologians are increasingly dropping the old 'universalist' assumption about their work and are producing contextual theologies for western communities. A recent example which I have personally found very helpful is the trilogy written by Douglas John Hall subtitled 'Christian Theology in a North American Context'⁹.

We should perhaps note that the old, 'universalist' style of theologising at least had the advantage of assuming that anyone could play (all Christians, certainly, and perhaps outsiders, all who were willing to 'learn the language'). There were agreed rules for the discourse so that agreed conclusions were expected and disagreements were important, and readily pursued. In practice, not so many could play because learning the language of theology was a difficult and lengthy matter. Part of the original contextual agenda was to challenge this assumption by identifying questions that were closer to ordinary church people, within a given local context.



It seems that some of the problems of the old 'universalising' style re-appear in local theologies where there is room for disagreement about how to describe the context and how to define a given group's identity. As with the older style, it seems to me that the path of wisdom is to recognise the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us to discern what can be said about – and to – God. Group identity can be a matter of conflict over definition and therefore ownership and power within the culture of the group. Local theologies are meant to aid us in common understanding, not just of the reality of our own context but more importantly, what God is doing with us and our context. It seems to me to be a danger sign in contextual theology when arguments over definitions of identity start up. The reality is that we human beings seem to be inexhaustibly plural when we look for identity. For me, the principle needs to be that each person carries a different set of relationships with our broad, common world, so that for each of us, our context – and particularly our perspective on our context – is subtly different from that of our neighbour. I conclude that the aim of contextual theology should not be the articulation of cultural difference (once started, never ending) but the enrichment of our shared life and community of faith from our individual theological perspectives, some of which may be recognisably shared with specific groups of people (along the lines of culture, nation, race, gender, family, denomination, occupation, pattern of relationship, etc., etc).

Another related point is that there are many different dimensions of 'context'. Contextual Theology might lead in the direction of sociological analysis and mission strategising, or liturgical innovation, or prayerful opening to God in the context of everyday life or the analysis of national historical experience or reflection on language and thought forms. The idea of context is really a methodological reminder that God is already present to us, surrounding us in every aspect of our lives and that any of these aspects could be a window onto the wider reality of God and our world as seen by God. There is hope that attention to context will indeed give us a 'living, relevant theology' for the Pacific. This is more likely to be the case if we can agree that such a theology will be a matter of major questions and 'work in progress' answers, not a systematic

package of answers. Packaged theologies will quickly come to mirror the shortcomings of the older, 'universalist' theologies, with static formulations that are limiting, based on assumptions that become all too obvious to the eyes of further reflection and particularly to succeeding generations of Christians. My suggestion would be that the various areas of 'context' listed above, and any others deemed important, could be turned into major questions and carefully refined through being compared with those areas of the biblical witness that prayerful reliance on the Holy Spirit brings to our attention.

It has occurred to me that if I were writing this paper for an Australian audience, I may very well have chosen to begin with the excellent typology of contextual theologies that Stephen Bevans presents in his book "Models of Contextual Theology". In Australian theology, the western habit of starting with the abstract and going later to the specific local examples is well accepted, as is the habit of starting with a survey of previous literature. This approach seemed inappropriate to me here because of the focus on Pacific Theology. I found it natural to begin with our present task and to recognise the work already done by a Pacific theologian. Bevans's work supports the understanding of contextual theology as an essential part of theology as such.

Contextual theology can be defined as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologising; and social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation. Doing theology contextually is not an option, nor is it something that should only interest people from the Third World or missionaries who work there. The contextualisation of theology – is really a theological imperative. As we understand theology today, contextualisation is part of the very nature of theology itself.¹⁰

The general point is that culture and social change – the context of the theologian (s) – form as essential a part of the ingredients of theology as the Bible and the traditions of the Christian churches. Yet we can note that Bevans' way of talking about it refers to 'the grass-roots'



struggle for equality, justice and liberation', which is a more obvious part of the context in the Philippines, where Bevens has worked, than in Tonga.

Bevens identifies five models for doing contextual theology. They are offered as ideal types; theologians will – and should – use more than one approach in practice. The models can be distinguished by their starting-points and by the way that they handle the four areas mentioned as basic ingredients of theology in Bevens' definition. The most traditional model he calls the Translation model¹¹. This model identifies the theological task as translating the received gospel into new cultures and contexts. There is risk and creativity required for this work. Yet the gospel, as defined from outside the local culture, is taken as a given, so that the outside definition, whatever it is, functions as a norm by which to judge the value of the local work.

The second model he calls the Anthropological model¹². Here, the chosen starting-point is 'the people', whose culture and reality are accepted as a given. We can wonder about how we judge the Christian character of a theology which seems to cut itself loose from sources of revelation which can be over against a given culture; but there may be an acceptable answer to these doubts in terms of the work of the Holy Spirit within cultures and theologians, particularly where the authentic notes of divine judgement and mercy can be heard.

The third model he calls the Praxis model¹³. In this model, scripture, tradition, culture and social change are all noted, but theological validity derives from what the Holy Spirit reveals as we travel under the guidance of the Spirit on the path of discipleship. There is no basis for abstract and general theological truths that float away from the requirements of day-by-day discipleship, but theology remains vitally important as part of our seeking and finding guidance from the Holy Spirit on the way. Liberation theologies in general would seem to fall within this model.

The fourth model he calls the Synthetic model¹⁴. He says that this model uses elements from all the others, but in a conversational dialogue in which validity might show up from any source, whether Bible or tradition

or culture. It seems to be close to the third model, though with the emphasis upon dialogue rather than upon action and reflection.

The fifth model he calls the Transcendental Model¹⁵. In this mode, the element of the context that is selected for close attention is the internalised culture of the theologian himself or herself. The reference is to the transcendental philosophies which look for the presuppositions that are implicit in basic realities of our experience. All theologians will have personal experiences which have led them to theologise, whether special experiences of personal or mystical revelation or the general experiences common to their culture. Other elements tend to be ordered in terms of the basic categories of analysis which the theologian can identify as already received and internalised in their own thinking.

Bevans tells us that all these five models are valid¹⁶, in the sense that they have shown themselves capable of enabling fresh and valuable theologising. Each model has its strengths and weaknesses. The choice of model can properly be said to be a matter of context! We should also note that these five models, while they cover a lot of ground, cannot be said to be exhaustive of all possibilities. My own intuition is that distinctively Pacific theologising could well break new ground through developing methodologies that do not obviously conform to any of Bevans' models. This should not be an aim of the work, however, as there is much to be done through simply adapting and applying each of Bevans' models in the Pacific context.

Contextual approaches in theology, as we can see in each of these models, challenge any idea that a theologian could produce a complete system. The *Summa Theological* of Thomas Aquinas and the *Systematic Theology* of Paul Tillich are brilliant achievements, in their very different ways. They can appear to be complete, final and self-enclosed. Yet they achieve this wholeness through recognisable processes of abstraction and selection of focus in which large areas of life and experience are necessarily omitted or touched only indirectly. Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* was famously uncompleted. A work of theology can reach a level of completion relative to its own project. Fresh contexts require fresh projects. In each dimension of theology into which we look, we



discover boundaries beyond which fresh questions inevitably emerge. I could mention as an example the boundaries created by the language in which the work is done, with its frontier upon the biblical languages and its vulnerability to the ongoing shifts within all living languages.

Even more important than this necessary incompleteness is the connection between theology and the preaching of the church, or the mission thinking of the church. Theology is not an end in itself for Christians. Theology plays an important role in the thinking and the educative work of the church. It therefore interacts with the living reflections and mission experience of the church. It is part of the life of the church and cannot be artificially isolated from the realities of that life. Indeed, much the same has been said about the gospel itself, from the perspective of Christian mission in fresh forms in each culture.

The gospel cannot be considered as a finished product. The cultural and spiritual processes behind the formation of the text involve nations and cultures, confessions and confrontations, tears and prayers, faith and fellowship, self-denial and martyrdom. 'The agony and the ecstasy' behind such a dynamic gospel is created by the total experience of communities of faith across time and space.¹⁷

This may be one reason why contextual theology can seem shocking or disturbing to some people. We all like to feel secure in our faith. Our present understanding of God is the result of our life experience and walk with God to this point. The working assumption that our faith may have more growing to do and that our present understanding may be shown to be inadequate in some way is enough to make us deeply uncomfortable. I have come to assume that it is generally a work of the Holy Spirit to make us uncomfortable in this way, though there are many less worthy causes to acknowledge as well. The challenge of contextual theology is to look again into the reality of our present world in order to see what God is doing/has done/will do.

There is another reason for anxiety about contextual theology which is related to this. For all of us, our context is itself formed by previous hearing of the gospel. Churches quickly develop a life of their own and

therefore a culture of their own. This is part of how the gospel incarnates into culture – and it can hardly be otherwise. So any fresh opening up to new aspects of our context necessarily implies some departure, great or small, from our existing way of life and understanding. When we believe that where we are now is already fully faithful to the gospel, we are unlikely to see any need for a fresh departure. This attitude, while humanly very understandable, is really based on the idea that we are already in heaven, or at least next door to heaven, in its waiting room, and that any new departure can only take us further away from heaven. It takes courage as well as wisdom to recognise that all our forms of church life have been developed in response to the gospel at a definite time and place and that our present time and place is already a little bit different. There are new challenges coming and contextual theology, properly understood, is one of our best means of recognising them early and looking for faithful responses while we yet have time for reflection.

So it would seem to be a reality that attention to ‘context now’ implies some departure from inherited forms of life, work and worship. This is sometimes thought to mean a disrespect for the giants of the past who gave us these blessings. The debate about how to view the achievements and/or mistakes of the missionaries is connected with this issue. It is the assumption of contextual theology – and I believe a proper assumption, one that is actually required by any theological work which seeks to be led by the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life – that Christians and the church in general, are free to develop fresh forms of life when appropriate. I see little need for change for the sake of change, though our vulnerability to boredom sometimes leads to this. Yet when the Spirit shows us new things, we are also given corresponding newness elsewhere in our lives, particularly in our worship and service, but also in our thoughts and theologising.

The impact of contextual theology is not only on our present life and work. It can also affect our understanding of our past, particularly where the past is crippling the present in some way. One general example is that where Christian mission was embedded in the colonial context, it

was all too easy for people to assume that Christian mission was in fact a western mission bringing Christian civilisation, not simply the Christian gospel. The gospel was too frequently identified with the Christian culture of the West in church and society. It is an important theological struggle to revisit mission history in order to identify how God's mission has been carried on, so that we can see both the grace and the judgement of God in the history of colonialism.

One important dimension of this question is that of how God was present and active with people before the arrival of the missionaries. This is one of the obvious places to look in order to distinguish the mission of God from the western mission. What can we say about God's work of preparing for the explicit coming of the Christian gospel? For a start, I see no way of denying that God has been active in this way. For me, it follows from the omnipresence and the redeeming love of God. As Peter says in response to meeting Cornelius, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him". (Acts 10:34). It is another matter, however, for us to claim reliable knowledge of how this has happened for any particular group of people, as the following story from northern Australia can show us.

The old man Mowinjin was a kidney fat man, a killer, a tribal warrior who was feared. One day he was out hunting with three other men. The others went on ahead and he stayed sitting by a tree. As he sat there, he received a vision. (This was before the missionaries came.)

He saw a man of God and he was given a song. He did not know what the words meant. A great peace came over him. When he 'woke up' he took his fighting spear and broke it in half. He began to play the music. The others heard it in the distance and as they returned and drew closer to Mowinjin, they were amazed at the change in him. He seemed to be different, although he was still Mowinjin. He had become a man of peace; he told them – and later all the people – about his vision. He never killed again. He was no longer an angry man, feared by the people; he became a man of peace. When missionaries came, he said: 'I have already seen Jesus, the one you are telling us about'. When

Mowinjin was very old, before he died he asked to become a Christian and was baptised.¹⁸

This story is difficult for us to interpret with certainty, but it clearly provides the basis for a claim by aboriginal people in Australia that Christ was spiritually present to them prior to the coming of the missionaries with the story of Jesus. Mowinjin seems like the apostle Paul in having a direct spiritual encounter with the Risen Christ, though unlike Paul, without previous knowledge of the name of Christ or subsequent authorisation as an apostle, apart from being a 'man of peace'. Alternatively, we might want to hear this story as a significant spiritual experience somehow parallel to the spread of the Christian gospel but not integral to it. This would mean denying the significance that Mowinjin and his community have placed upon the experience. To me, it is at least a helpful reminder that the issue of God's presence before the coming of Christian missionaries has a number of dimensions. I am happy to remain open to the interpretation placed upon the experience by those to whom it happened.

This story has a significant role to play in Australian contextual theology. It assists the ability of aboriginal Christians to relate to God directly and not through the language and traditions of western Christianity. It reminds western Christians that God runs the Christian mission, not his servants. It challenges us to relate this story to the biblical witness to Christ. The story reminds me of the interesting fact that when Jesus sent his disciples out on their first mission, he did not instruct them to teach and preach, but he gave them the authority to cast out evil spirits and heal the sick (Matthew 10:1). Mowinjin meets a 'man' who casts out the spirit of anger, fighting and killing. Maybe the casting out of evil spirits is part of the necessary preparation for receiving the gospel. If this is so, it raises for me the recognition that the abiding anger against many aspects of colonialism in many places must count as part of what still stands in the way of the reception of the gospel in these places. These points probably raise more questions than they answer, which is a large part of my answer to the question of how we do contextual theology.

Let me conclude with some questions for group discussion which arise



from what I have presented above.

1. What aspects of the Tongan context seem most in need of further theological reflection?
2. What can be said about the presence of Christ in Tonga prior to the arrival of the missionaries? On what basis can it be said? Once it is said, how can we begin to test any such claim?
3. How can we expect contextual theology to assist the church in its life and work?

Notes

- 1 SB Bevans. *Models of Contextual Theology*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), pp. 14-15. I shall discuss his models later in this paper. Bevans is an American Divine Word missionary and teacher.
- 2 IS Tuwere. "What is Contextualisation? A View from Oceania". *Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, No. 27, 2002. (Suva, Fiji: South Pacific Association of Theological Schools), pp.7-20.
- 3 Tuwere, p.7.
- 4 Tuwere, p.8.
- 5 Tuwere, p.10.
- 6 Tuwere, p.11.
- 7 Nicene Creed.
- 8 Tuwere, p.11-12.
- 9 DJ Hall. *Thinking the Faith*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999). The other two volumes are titled *Professing the Faith* and *Confessing the Faith*.
- 10 Bevans, p.1.
- 11 Bevans, pp.30-46.
- 12 Bevans, pp.47-62.
- 13 Bevans, pp.63-80.
- 14 Bevans, pp.81-96.
- 15 Bevans, pp.97-110.
- 16 Bevans, pp.111.
- 17 KM George, "The Bible in Context: An Indian Story". In *Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures*. Ed. C Duraisingh. (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1998), p.139. This is the full report of the conference on world mission and evangelism held in Salvador, Brazil, 1996.
- 18 Duraisingh, pp. 121-122. This story was told to the world conference by the Rev. Wali I'ejo, a Larrakia man (Darwin area) and a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. He attributes the story to the daughter of the old man Mowinjin.



Rev. Dr. T.T.M. Puloka

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SISU TONGA

Ko e vaofi 'a e vamama'o
(Ko e teolosia faka Tonga)

‘I HE KEI FUOFUONOA ‘A E FUNGA ‘O E LOLOTO
NA‘A NE FOLOFOLA PE PEA CREATIO-EX-NIHILO
‘UNIVEESI NI KUO MA‘OPO‘OPO PEA TU‘UHOKO
‘OTUA ‘O E FAKATUPU, KO E MU‘AKI ‘O E KAKATO
‘I TONGA MO MAMANI HE HOPO ‘A E ‘LA‘A‘PEA TO
MEI HE KAKATO ‘A SISU KUO VAOFI E VAMAMA‘O

FUNGANI ‘O E FAKATUPU ‘A FEFINE MO TANGATA
FAKAHA‘ANGA ‘O E MISITELI ‘OTUA ‘I TAUAKAKAPA
‘AKILOTOA HE NGOUE KAKALA KAE LAUTA‘ELATA
MUSU E LOTO TALANGATA‘A ‘ILO ‘ENE ANGAHALA
FIELAU HE KO E NOFO ‘I ‘API MOLI KAE FU HALA
‘AIKAKANO ‘A E ‘OTUA ‘SALAVIFIKA HE PESONA UA
TULOU MO HA‘A LOTU MO E TAUKEI HE TEOLOSIA
TAUFATUNGAMOTU‘A ‘O E LOTU PEA MO E FONUA
FOEKINA HOKU LAUMALIE ‘E HE HUELO‘I ‘OTUA



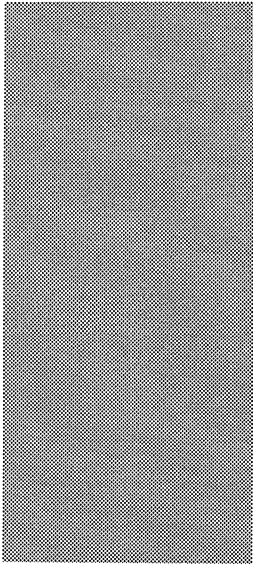
HE KUO TUKUA 'I MAAMA HAKO E HULI TAPUHA
PASIONA MO FAITOKA KAE TOETU'U KO E IKUNA
HULU 'ETE MAFANA 'LAVE MAI HOKU SISU TONGA

NAISEA UHOTAHA TAMA & 'ALO HE HOMOOUSIOS
TANGATA KAKATO PEA 'OTUA KAKATO 'A KALAISI
FAKAMAAUTUKU 'A KALISITONI HE HAPOSITATIKI
FILIOQUE 'I TOLEDO HOKO LAUMALIE MA'ON'ONI
589TS TU'UKAU'OI HE TELOSI MOTUHIA E FEOHI
SISU TONGA IA HOKO MAI HE TOETU'U 'A KALAISI

'OTUA TUPU MEI 'OTUA MA'ON'ONI PEA MAFIMAFI
TA'EMAHAKULEA 'O AONIU 'ENE PULE PEA KATOI
'OTUA 'O KAKAI MO E LEA KOTOA PE 'O MAMANI
KUO NE 'AIKAKANO 'O MO'UI HE LOTO 'O E KAKAI
HU'I E HISITOLIA KAE FAITEUNGA KALAISI 'O E TUI
KO IA HOKU SISU TONGA KUO LOTOLU AI E KATOI

TOLU TAPU TAHA'I 'OTUA KO E MISITELI 'O E OPE'
KELEDO HE UNA SUBSTANTIA TRES PERSONNAE
TUPU MO MOUI, MATE MO MO'UI, HE 'OTUA AI PE
'IA SISU KALAISI KUO TATAU AI E TAHA KOTOA PE
MAKATU'UNGA IA SI'ETE KOLE KE 'A TONGA MAI E
SISU TONGA SI'I TUNU 'ETE IKA KAE KAI 'ETE FEKE

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SISU TONGA TONGA JESUS (The Immanent Transcendence)

In the beginning and as the void was still formless,
Thou hadst spoken and the earth fio cretio-ex-nihilo
Cosmos in order, creative, purposive, and potent.
Creator God in whom essence and existence are the same,
In Tonga and throughout the world the sun rises and sets;
Of divine aseity Jesus is the immanent of transcendence.

Man and Woman the excellence of divine creation,
Manifestation of mysterium Deo in unreachable reaches.
Couched in the Garden of Eden but homesick still,
Reduced by guilt and convicted of transgression.
Such is being at the fruit garden but ignorant of a catch,
Salvation is incarnational, vocatio of the Second Persona.

May I speak, Good Christian people and theologians,
Faith traditions and the sacred customs of our land;
My spirit is touched by the illumination of God,
Homegrown is the choice shoot of the Most High.
Suffered, buried, and resurrected in victorious realism,
O I am overjoyed in the presence of my Sisu Tonga.



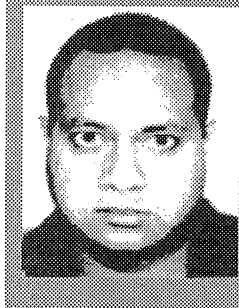
Nicea sets in motion Trinitas the basis of my effort,
Chalcedon says Christ is fully God fully Man, *omoousios*
Hypostasis opens the way for this insisting search.
Toledo 589AD sealed the debate on filioque, did it?
Dear Eastern brothers couldn't stay, and departed,
Thus Sisu Tonga is firmly rooted in Deus revelatus.

God Eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient,
Of thy majestic reign which is unspeakable and forever,
For Thou art God of all people and languages.
Thou hadst incarnated in people's hearts and minds;
Thus history and experience are contextually situated,
As my Sisu Tonga is the experienced reality of faith.

Triune God, manifestation of extreme transcendence,
As loci theologici says una substantia et tres personae;
Live and let live, death and life again, all in God's love.
In Christ all people are one thus unio essentialis,
Basis of my appeal for a Tongan contextual theology;
Sisu Tonga, tiny roasted fish turned into delicious octopus.

An English translation of the original Tongan, "Sisu Tonga, Vaofi 'a e Vamama'o." by Tevita Tonga Mohenoa Puloka.

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Pacific Theology: A Re-consideration of its Methodology

*An Essay presented to the Sub-Regional Convention on
Contextual Theology in Tonga. November 2002*

Introduction.¹

Some years ago, I asked my mentor and friend, the Reverend Dr. Peter T. O'Brien, why we (his students) have to write critiques of each other's work in his class, for even he himself – being a prominent New Testament scholar – has to present a paper to which one of us was assigned that difficult task of writing some critical remarks. With his characteristic calmness, he replied, 'Who makes the decisions in your Tongan community?'. I said, 'The elders'. Then he asked me a searching question: 'Are those decisions always right?' Offering a critique often (but not always) results in making new enemies of old friends, if it is taken personally. If, on the other hand, it is taken as the implementation of the biblical principle of 'speaking the truth to one another *in love*', especially in Christian circles, then critiques should ultimately lead to the edification of the believers (Eph.4:15). What I propose to do in this essay is to offer some critical reflections on the current methodological procedure of Pacific Theology.

The Quest for a Pacific Theology

In 1986, Dr. Sione 'Amanaki inaugurated a quest for a Pacific Theology by urging all theologians of the Pacific



to move beyond the 'Pacific Christ as a picture' to a 'Pacific Theology as a theme'.² The impetus for this new quest was provided in the welcoming speech of the Governor-General of Papua New Guinea, Sir John Guise, to the 1976 Third Assembly of the Pacific Council of Churches. Sir Guise opened the meeting by imposing upon them a demand to,

reveal to us the Pacific Christ... Many thousands of Christians in the Pacific believe in the Christian faith, but they believe in Christ in an abstract form. Because Christ was not born in any of the Pacific countries; he may still be someone who does not belong to the soil of the Pacific. But the Christian faith and Christ himself must become a living reality in our villages, in our culture, as well as in our lives...³

Notably, an appeal is made to a supposed discontinuity between the Jesus Christ of the Bible and the Jesus Christ believed in by Pacific Christians. The Jesus Christ of the Bible is considered to be 'an abstract' since he is geographically removed from Pacific islander believers. Hence, a 'Pacific Christ' is an attempt to make the abstract figure of Jesus Christ of the Bible, who was born in Bethlehem, 'belong to the soil of the Pacific'. The Governor-General, however, did not go as far as offering a methodological consideration through which this attempt to localise Christ in the Pacific context was to be made.

Dr. Havea took up this initiative at the 1986 meeting of Pacific evangelical theologians in Papua New Guinea and claimed that the Christianity brought by the nineteenth century missionaries was a 'foreign religion' since it has remained nurtured, as it were, in its 'western theological pod'. Pacific Theology 'as a theme' is, therefore, 'an effort to put faith and the Gospel in the local soil and context so that they can exist in a local climate'. It is 'an effort to interpret and to see with Pacific eyes and to listen with Pacific ears' to the gospel message and thus to contextualize it.

According to Dr. Havea, 'seeing with Pacific eyes' means to look at our history which consists mainly of long-cherished aetiological legends and myths, and to our various cultures, our Pacific customs and even our physical surroundings in the Pacific region to ascertain illustrations for what God is like and is doing in the world.⁴ His working assumption is that the Good News is universal. What we have as the 'good news' in the Gospels is the teaching of a Jesus who had grown up in a 'Hebraic context'. Since Jesus 'grew up in a Hebrew context. Particularly in his parables, he illustrated many things which were regional and limited to his culture and environment, and yet the meanings and theological interpretations were universal: their catholicity can be proved relevant to the whole ecumenical community'.⁵ Therefore, to contextualize is to imagine what Jesus would have taught had he grown up in the Pacific context.

Dr. Havea is quite certain that '[i]f Jesus had grown up in a Pacific context, he would have related his teaching to what we have in the Pacific: the coconut, yams and taro; the Pacific delicacies; the hibiscus and orchids; the Kava (*Yangona*) and betel nuts; and the celebrations of birth, marriage and death'.⁶ Consequently, Pacific Theology constitutes the imaginary construction of the teachings or the 'theologies' of Jesus, had he grown up as a Pacific Islander. In other words, the question which sets the contemporary agenda of Pacific Theology is: 'What if Jesus was a Pacific islander?'

What should perhaps be obvious from this brief sketch of the origin of the quest for a Pacific Theology, is that the methodological procedure set forth by Dr. Havea consists of two constitutive principles or presuppositions.

Pacific Theology's Constitutive Principle # 1

From a cursive look at Dr. Havea's 1986 foundational essay, it appears to me, at least, that the first constitutive principle of Pacific Theology is that the Jesus Christ of the biblical Gospels is removed from its Jewish ('Hebraic', according to Dr. Havea) context, and is assumed to be a Pacific islander. This is the response to the initial call made by the 1976



meeting for the ‘revelation’ of the Pacific Christ. The Jesus Christ of the Bible is ‘uprooted’ from his Jewish historical and cultural matrix within which he has been a particular human being coming from a particular race (viz. Jewish) and belonging to a particular tribe within that race (viz. the tribe of Judah) and is transplanted, so to speak, into the Pacific soil so as to ‘grow up’ as an imaginary Pacific islander.

This ‘trans-plant’ is accomplished by assuming that the ‘*Good News was already present before missionaries* came to the Pacific. In other words, they [the nineteenth century missionaries to the Pacific] did not have to bring these historical events in their suitcases! They only came to *make known* to us the Good News that was already here before they came!’.⁷

If the ‘good news’ was already here with us prior to the coming of the missionaries, then what the missionaries did was merely to reveal an ‘embodiment’ of that pre-existing Gospel. The Jesus of the Gospels is therefore to be seen simply as ‘an appearance’ of the ‘good news’ idea which we had with us in pre-missionary times. Thus, the ‘Pacific Christ’ is but an idea which was present with us prior to the coming of the Christian missionaries, but whose ‘appearance’ or ‘embodiment’ was to be ultimately found in the Jesus of the Gospels whom the missionaries preached to us.

Pacific Theology’s Constitutive Principle # 2

With a ‘Pacific Christ’ firmly established, we can then put our speculations and imaginations into operation, in order to construct the content of a Pacific ‘gospel’, as it were, which becomes the ‘teachings’ or the ‘theologies’ of Jesus, had he grown up a Pacific islander. In other words, Jesus is being deployed as a ‘ventriloquist mask’ to afford our personal pre-determined theological agenda.⁸ The content of Pacific Theology thus far has been the ‘gospels’ or the ‘theologies’ of this ‘Pacific Christ’ idea whose contemporaneous ‘embodiment’ is Pacific theologians.⁹

The Various Theologies of a Pacific Christ

With this method being the *modus operandi* of contextualization in the South Pacific region for the past sixteen years or so, a variety of Pacific

'gospels', or more appropriately, 'theologies', have been propagated by Pacific theologians. These have been derived, following Dr. Havea's lead, from our physical surroundings, our customs and from our legends and myths. From our immediate physical surroundings in the Pacific has emerged Dr. Havea's 'Coconut Theology',¹⁰ Dr. Tuwere's 'Oceanic Theology',¹¹ Sr. Kanongata'a's 'Theology of Birthing and Liberation',¹² and Dr. Meo's 'Theology of Smallness'.¹³ From the vantage point of Pacific customs, we have Dr. Havea's 'Theology of Celebration',¹⁴ Boseto's 'Gospel of economy',¹⁵ Dr. Mafaufau's 'Pacific time'¹⁶ and Dr. Koria's 'Samoan Concept of *Fa'aaloalo*'.¹⁷ There has not much been done, as far as I am concerned, in terms of drawing from our Pacific aetiological legends and myths to assist in the formulation of the teachings of the 'Pacific Jesus', except Dr. Havea's usage of the origin of the kava ceremony as a means of symbolizing forgiveness.¹⁸ This, of course, is not an exhaustive list in documenting the various 'theologies' that have come about through the operation of the methodological procedure proposed by Dr. Havea,¹⁹ but it is a sufficient sample to display the vast array of 'theologies' produced through it.

I have offered a critical evaluation of Pacific Theology as a theological enterprise elsewhere and there is no need to repeat myself at this juncture, except to affirm one point.²⁰ That is, although these theological derivations have been apparently satisfying to the professional theologians of the Pacific,²¹ there is one main flaw which is common to all of them: these theological constructions have been profoundly impractical on the grassroots level of the local church.²²

An Appraisal of Attempts at Contextualization in Pacific Theology

The aim of this essay, it must be remembered, is to offer some critical reflections on the current method of Pacific Theology and its two constitutive elements, namely, the 'Pacific Christ' and the various 'gospels' or 'theologies' of the 'Pacific Christ'. But before proceeding any further, I want to say that the driving force which keeps this entire movement towards a Pacific Theology in the Pacific going, namely, seeking to make the Jesus Christ of the Bible meaningful to us here in the Pacific, is a very noble aim. In fact, Erickson is correct in thinking 'that the issue of



contemporizing the biblical message is possibly the singly most important issue facing evangelical hermeneutics today'.²³ Undoubtedly, Dr. Havea pioneered a movement in which attempts have been made to apply the message of the gospel to us in the Pacific in ways and through cultural symbols more suitable to our existential particularity as Pacific islanders.

Some Preliminary Remarks on the Presuppositions of Pacific Theology.

Three preliminary remarks deserve to be made before the next step in my discussion can be profitably undertaken. *First*, although a case can undoubtedly be made for the disproportionate and sometimes thoughtless influence of Western missionaries on the Christianity we have received in the Pacific, one senses that in the current theological climate, we have become very adept at criticizing their stance but are rather weak in the matter of finding awkward spots in our own proposals. Little of this is helpful to the cause of Christ and the edification of His church. It is, therefore, the underlying purpose of this essay to invoke a sense of epistemic humility that may prompt us, Pacific theologians, to shine the spotlight upon our own method of contextualization in order to find its intrinsic awkward spots.

My own judgement is that in much of what we have generated as a result of the implementation of the current contextual methodology, we have somehow failed to achieve the status of *Christian* theological discourse. I shall explain more fully what I mean as this essay progresses but it is suffice to say, that for the theological enterprise to be truly *Christian* it must remain founded on the person, teaching and saving work of the Christ, the crucified Savior and risen Lord to whom the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments (cf. Lk.24:44-47; Jn.5:39-40), are our unique source of testimony. As Professor Bruce remarkably puts it, "To sit loose of Scripture is thus to sit loose of Christ to whom it bears witness, to sit loose of him is to relax our Christian faith and life".²⁴

Thus without the Scriptures holding the authoritative 'rein' in theology, as is reflected in the present state of Pacific Theology, we can only have a theological enterprise undertaken under the heritage of Christendom

but it has ceased to be *Christian* theology. Professor Carson sums up what I am saying in a more challenging manner:

It is not *Christian* theology unless it is disciplined discourse about the God who is central in Christian religion – the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who is the transcendent Creator, the God who is personal, the God who speaks, the God who has revealed himself supremely in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth... Christian theology[,] must be discourse whose subject matter is finally and irrevocably constrained by that revelation.²⁵

Secondly, Dr. Havea's assertion that the nineteenth century missionaries to the Pacific brought with them a 'western faith' which has been left untransplanted, as it were, to the 'local soil' has fostered an ungrateful attitude towards the nineteenth century missionaries amongst a number of theologians in the Pacific.²⁶ But Dr. Havea's accusation is, to some extent, open to question. To begin with, it ought to be said that the gospel brought by the missionaries was not a 'western' gospel but rather the 'gospel of God' which is *about his Son, Jesus Christ*, who, '*as to his human nature was a descendant of David* and who through the Spirit of holiness was *declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord*' (Rom.1:3-4).²⁷ A thorough examination of the content of the Good News brought by the Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century from records of their sermons and from the conversion testimonies of those who were converted through their preaching, has yet to be done as an important project in Pacific Theology.

Thirdly, Dr. Havea's accusation that the nineteenth century missionaries did not seek to 'put faith and the Gospel in the local soil and context so that they can exist in a local climate' finds no support in the history of Christian mission in Tonga.²⁸ In fact, the missionaries did attempt to 'transplant' the faith, but in ways that were rather constrained by their



faithfulness to the gospel message which they had brought with them. One of the first things that the nineteenth century missionaries to Tonga did, for instance, was to translate the Bible into Tongan. As conversion to Christianity increased, they set up a printing press to more easily translate Christian literature into Tongan. The missionaries also established schools to equip believers with reading skills to comprehend their Bibles.²⁹ This effort to translate the Bible and other Christian literature into Tongan ought to be considered as part of the nineteenth century missionaries' effort to 'transplant' the gospel message to the local climate. Bible translations enabled Tongan believers to worship the Jesus of the Bible in their own language. Therefore, the assertion that the missionaries have neglected 'Pacific Theology' can hardly be substantiated from historical evidence. On the contrary, they did so, but in a fashion more faithful to the Christian Scriptures than the contemporary method of contextualization in Pacific Theology.

The fundamental flaw of constitutive principle # 1: The 'Pacific Christ'.

I will now turn to critically assess the two constitutive principles of Pacific Theology, namely, the 'Pacific Christ' and the 'gospels' or 'theologies' of the 'Pacific Christ'. In this section I shall deal with what I consider as the first constitutive principle of Pacific Theology, namely, the 'Pacific Christ'.

First, the 'Pacific Christ' is ontologically different from the Jesus Christ of the Bible. According to Dr. Havea, what we have in Pacific Theology was a 'Christ idea' which was here with us before the missionaries arrived.³⁰ This means that the Jesus of the Bible which was brought by the missionaries is simply an embodiment of a pre-existing 'Christ idea'. The problem is that this means that the 'Pacific Christ' is ontologically different from the Jesus of the Bible. The Jesus of the Bible was not an embodiment of a pre-existing 'Christ idea', but the 'in-flesh-ment' of the eternal God the Son, the second person of the Trinity (Jn.1:1-18).³¹

In fact, the 'Pacific Christ' does not have the cross as his ultimate destiny. From the publications of Pacific theologians it appears that the 'Pacific

Christ' is not destined for the cross as the Jesus of the Bible was.³² The 'Pacific Christ' is rather destined to 'theologize' in the Pacific region with symbols particularly pertinent to them. In other words, the mission of the 'Pacific Christ' is not to 'save us' by being crucified on the cross, but simply to 'teach us' in ways that will be comprehensible to us. A comparative study of the Jesus of the Bible and the 'Pacific Christ' is called for, but the point I want to make at this instance is that the latter is ontologically different from the former.

Secondly, the 'Pacific Christ' is a re-emergence of the age old docetism heresy in a cultural guise. Docetism began with an abstract idea of God and defined his nature without reference to him. That is to say, one can know the deity *already before he is revealed*. In other words, one knows the truth already as a supra-historical, absolute idea. Now when God is thought of as an idea, Christ must be understood as an *appearance of this idea*, and not as an individual. This heresy disregards the humanity of Christ. This is what is discernible from Dr. Havea's remark that the Good News was already present with us before the missionaries came. What they did was simply to 'make known' this fact to us.³³ If the idea of God pre-existed here in the Pacific, even before the missionaries came, then the role of the Christian missionaries, therefore, was confined to bringing an 'appearance' or an 'embodiment' of this pre-existing God idea to us. Thus, the Jesus of the Bible which the missionaries proclaimed to us here in the Pacific is not an individual whose existence can be amply testified about by the eye-witness accounts of the Biblical Gospels. He is rather an embodiment of the God idea already pre-existing with us in the Pacific at pre-Christian times.

The legacy of Dr. Havea remains with us in Dr. T.T.M. Puloka's "Sisu Tonga" or *Tongan Jesus*.³⁴ Tu'ivai, an admirer of Dr. Puloka's thinking, perhaps puts the matter into sharper focus. He says that "Sisu Tonga" is not an individual person, but rather the "embodiment of the power of Jesus in certain Tongan individuals".³⁵ Apparently then, Jesus is not an individual, an historical person who lived and died and rose again in first century Palestine to which the New Testament bears the most reliable historical witness. He is rather a kind of 'power', which can be (and has



been) embodied in various individuals in the history of Christianity in Tonga.³⁶

Now the origin of this way of thinking lies in the Greek antithesis between idea and phenomenon. The Greeks thought that what appears in the world is inessential compared with what exists in the world of ideas. The docetic heresy is the typical heresy of Greek thought. Such a pre-figurement of Jesus is, according to Bonhoeffer, 'a superb example of pagan thought'.³⁷

Thirdly, the 'Pacific Christ' is a mythologization of the biblical Jesus Christ. Bultmann spent a lifetime arguing for the *demythologization* of the biblical Jesus. Having being armed with the scientific worldview, he sought to remove all that was not congenial with such a worldview from the story of Jesus. The assumption of Pacific Theology is that we had the idea of the 'good news' even before the missionaries came. We can assume that Pacific Theology has 'read into' the biblical figure of Jesus of Nazareth the pre-existing 'Christ' idea, which is derived from our myths and legends as is depicted in Dr. Havea's thinking about the origin of the kava ceremony.³⁸ Professor Helu has reminded us that, 'We must recognise that myths proper are deliberate creations of the mind'.³⁹ Thus, to re-configure the biblical Jesus with our myths and legends is to reduce Jesus to a deliberate creation of a 'Pacific' mind. In other words, what we have effectively done has been to 'mythologize' the Jesus of the Bible by clothing him with a legendary and mythical cloak extracted from our legends and myths.

Fourthly, the 'Pacific Christ' is but a figment of our own imagination. Professor Helu insists that 'myth' is a body of knowledge derived from deploying our own personal experiences to explain objective reality beyond our epistemic grasp.⁴⁰ Thus, in pre-modern Tonga, an earthquake was described as Maui, the god of the underworld, turning in his sleep. This is due to the fact that when Tongans turn in their sleep, it would be sheer goodness of luck if their houses are not re-configured in ways hostile to their imagination. As Helu explains, 'Here we have ... 'Primitive' man, after looking at the object that requires 'explanation', returns to himself and fashions the explanation out of his own

interests'.⁴¹ Hence, when Tongans are confronted with an objective reality beyond descriptive capacity viz. an earthquake, they are bound to describe it in a way that is more in line with their daily experiences.

Such a description of reality, of course, tells us more about their sleeping habits than the reality they are seeking to describe. The point that Helu wants to demonstrate is that, this is an unscientific way of looking at reality. So also, the 'Pacific Christ'. It is a derivation of an unscientific approach to theology. Barth and Torrance have argued for the employment of scientific method of inquiry in theology, where the 'subject matter' is allowed to give us the proper question with which we are to deal in the theological enterprise. Since the proper subject matter of Christian theology is not God 'but God in his relationship - for the essence of God is eternal relationship'⁴², or in other words, the Trinity,⁴³ then as far as scientific inquiry is concerned, this should be allowed to regulate the agenda of theology proper.

Moreover, Feuerbach's account of the idea of God as a projection of human ideals to the infinite finds a certain application in the 'Pacific Christ' idea. In Pacific Theology, we can now speak of Jesus, the 'coconut of life', or Jesus, the 'perfect pig' and even a 'Tongan Jesus' and who knows what? While all of these are attempts at making the biblical picture of Jesus pertinent to us Pacific islanders, they suffer being the 'projection of Pacific ideals' to the infinite. Jesus may perhaps be accepted in Pacific Theology as a real man, but we have projected upon him the mental images which reflect the variety of temperaments and ideals of Pacificians.

As a result, what we have in Pacific Theology is a re-creation of Jesus in our own image as a Pacific islanders:⁴⁴ a beautiful piece of artwork, though it may be but far removed from the Jesus who walked on earth in first century Palestine and mediated to us by the Gospels. Here, the charge that Schweitzer brought against the nineteenth century 'Life of Jesus' studies is apt. That is, each successive presentation of Pacific theology 'found its own thoughts in Jesus; that was indeed the only way in which it could make Him live'. But worst still, each Pacific theologian created Jesus in accordance with his own culture, customs, legends or



physical surroundings.⁴⁵

Fifthly, the 'Pacific Christ' is an unsuccessful attempt to depict the saviour figure as a specific human being, namely, a Pacific islander. This was Liberalism's presentation of the Christ. According to Hans Frei, what we have in a representation of Jesus as such, is a 'Christ figure which does little more than provide symbolic form... for an essentially anthropological content'.⁴⁶ In this case, the symbolic figure of Christ functions to express, focus and evoke a certain kind of elemental and universal experience, whether participation in the vitalities of human life or deliverance from its painful alienations. This is the kind of experience which makes such a symbolic Christ meaningful.

The problem with such a presentation of Jesus, according to Frei, is that Jesus Christ becomes 'diffused into humanity by becoming one with it' and thus loses all self-focus and uniqueness.⁴⁷ Thus Jesus' presence and identity have the same token as that of ours, namely, ultimately lacking of abiding presence and identity. In other words, what we have as the 'Pacific Christ' ultimately has no real presence, as well as a unique identity. His identity is whatever we make him up to be.

Sixthly, the 'Pacific Christ' is inadequate for the hermeneutical task to which he is often applied or from which he is often abstracted. That is, 'Pacific Christ' would still fail in the task of interpreting and understanding the gospel narratives about Jesus. This is where, in my judgement, Pacific Theology has affected a widening of the 'gap' between the professional theologians and the laity.⁴⁸ In this respect, Pacific Theology is doing a great disservice to the local churches. First, it undermines the narrative structure of the Gospels and the profound clarity of the Scriptures and thus removes the lay reader's competence in reading the Bible. Secondly, it indirectly elevates the status of the class of professional theologians as the only group of able interpreters of the Bible with its culturally orientated method of reading the Gospel narratives.

Seventhly, the 'Pacific Christ' is in strict discontinuity with the Jesus of history. The 'Pacific Christ' is a re-emergence of the unsustainable dichotomy between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith'. In a

sense, Pacific theologians could appeal to the 'Pacific Christ' as being a derivative of the 'Christ of faith' in strict discontinuity with the 'Jesus of history', as a justification for their 'Christ' idea. But the old distinction between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' is an ontological separation which cannot be extracted from the biblical data. This separation is a relatively modern phenomenon, which resulted from the ascent of the historical critical method, but has so far been superseded by the emergence of the narrative approach.⁴⁹ But even the apostle Paul declared that the Jesus 'to whom all the Scriptures bear reliable testimony, is He whom regarding his flesh is the descendant of David and who, through the Spirit of holiness, was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead' (Rom. 1:1-4). Right at the outset of this epistle, Paul links the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith'.⁵⁰

Against the emphasis on the 'Pacific Christ', we ought to insist, with no hint of embarrassment, that the 'Jesus of history' is in fact the 'Christ of faith'. We ought to assert that there are no better ways of ascertaining the identity of Jesus Christ than to study the faithful depiction of Him by the eye-witnesses in the Gospels. Frei claims that this old Liberal distinction between the 'Christ of faith' and the 'Jesus of history' has been the result of a methodological procedure, which has just about run its course.⁵¹ He proposes the narrative approach to the Gospels as an alternative. Frei's approach establishes that what the Gospel story does is to present 'Jesus' identity as that of a 'singular irreplaceable person'. He affirms that '[t]he New Testament story deals simply and exclusively with the story of Jesus of Nazareth... and not with anybody else or with every man under the cover of Jesus' name'.⁵²

Moreover, some of the modern studies have established the New Testament stance of the unbroken continuity between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith'. Dunn has shown that a Christian confession concerning Jesus must identify the historical person (Jesus of Nazareth) and the present exalted person, in ways that are appropriate to the particular community confessing faith in him. Thus for some in the first century, that appropriate way was *Messiah*, for others it was the



Son of God, Lord, Saviour and so on. But regardless of the term used though, a confession was (and is) Christian only if it identifies the historical and exalted person in ways that appropriately reflect and capture the salvation experienced by the community. In other words, whatever happened on the first Easter morning, the early Christians believed that the Christ whom they met in post-resurrection appearances was the same person as the Jesus whom they had known before the crucifixion.⁵³

Therefore, since the 'Pacific Christ' is in strict discontinuity with the 'Jesus of history' then 'he' is an entirely different phenomenon from the Jesus of the Gospels.

Eighthly, the 'Pacific Christ' is not the Christ of the Incarnation. As I have mentioned above, the 'Pacific Christ' is an embodiment of a pre-existent Christ idea which we had with us in the Pacific before the arrival of the missionaries. An attempt has been made to justify this move from the story of the Incarnation.⁵⁴ Such a deployment, however, results only in intensifying the erratic picture of Jesus of the Bible embodied in the 'Pacific Christ'. According to this argument, the incarnation is not perceived primarily as the in-flesh-ment of the second person of the Godhead into a particular individual namely the Jesus of Nazareth, but rather as a *Pacific* or a *Tongan* embodiment of the essence of deity which was pre-existed with us here before the coming of the missionaries. This proposition is then justified with an appeal to the character of God as being omnipresent.⁵⁵ Such a notion of the incarnation could have been justified if the text was to read "The Word. *became a Pacifician*". (Jn.1:14)

In striking contrast to this way of thinking, it ought to be insisted that in the incarnation, Jesus did not become an embodiment of a pre-existent Pacifician idea, but rather the eternal God assuming the form of a particular Jewish man living in a particular time and place. In fact, Torrance argues that in assuming our human nature, God is, in fact, particularized. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God assumed a 'space-time provenance'.⁵⁶ Moreover, he did not come in the flesh to be a justification for theological contextualization, but rather He assumed the 'likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering' (Rom.8:3) and to save

the lost by giving his life as a ransom for many (Mk.10:45). More specifically, he was incarnated to be the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world' (Jn.1:29, 36). The incarnation is therefore not intended as a demonstration of God's omnipresence (though it may be), but rather of the reality of His love for sinful mankind (Rom.5:8-9; Heb.2:14-18).

The fundamental flaw of the 'pot-plant' transportation method of Pacific Theology.

In as much as the 'Pacific Christ' is a result of the process of 'transplanting' of the faith from its so called 'western theological pod' to the 'local soil', which has been set forth by Dr. Havea, 'he' is, apart from what has levelled against 'him', a product of an illegitimate methodological procedure. Thus far, I have dealt with the 'Pacific Christ'. Now I shall turn to the mechanism that has led to the creation of the 'Pacific Christ': namely the 'pot-plant' transportation of the so-called 'pure unadapted gospel', brought by the missionaries to our culture in the Pacific. Since this method is what Dr. Havea refers to as *contextualization*⁵⁷, I shall use his terminology at this instance.

First, contextualization in Pacific Theology is driven by an unscientific method. Theology was traditionally regarded as the 'queen of the sciences'. Torrance has argued for the re-instatement of theology to this traditional position amongst the sciences by positing that the scientific method of inquiry - where the object of study is allowed to set the agenda upon which a necessary dialogue is to proceed between the observer and the object of study - is to be adopted as the *modus operandi* in the theological enterprise. Torrance is offering an alternative pathway of knowledge to the habit of mind derived from classical Greece, which has become widely entrenched in the great European tradition of analytical thought, where sensible appearances of things were abstracted from the intelligible base in which they were grounded, with disastrous consequences, ... in philosophy and science for it meant that knowledge of reality was artificially cut short at appearances and what we can logically deduce from our critical observations of them.⁵⁸

In my judgement, this is what has been the fundamental move that

brought forth the first constitutive element of Pacific Theology. Dr. Havea's argument, for transportation of the 'faith', affected an abstraction of the appearance of 'Jesus', from the intelligible base in which He has been grounded, namely the Jewish historical and cultural context. The disastrous consequences of such a move has been, according to Torrance, 'to detach Jesus Christ from God; to detach Jesus Christ from Israel and to detach Christianity from Christ himself'.⁵⁹ Once this has happened, as it has in Pacific Theology, not only is the Christian Gospel at stake, but the end result is a Christianity without Christ. For when Jesus Christ is abstracted from the matrix of natural or inherent relations, in which he is found in the Bible, then an abstraction of the external appearance of Christ from the objective frame of event and significance, with which he is bound up in the Gospel, is to follow.

Such an abstraction, as is common in Pacific Theology, is profoundly unscientific. For scientific inquiry, as it has been exemplified through the work of James Clerk Maxwell and Albert Einstein above all, according to Torrance, involves investigating things 'in their interrelations with one another, where relations between things have to do with what they actually are'.⁶⁰ If you like, what this entails is that we adopt a kind of approach in which the 'progress in understanding is necessarily circular'.⁶¹

How may we go about accomplishing such a process in Theology? Through the Incarnation, according to Torrance. For in the Incarnation, God entered or assumed the space-time dimension of humanity. In so doing, He acquired a being like that of a scientific concept, such as electromagnetism and quantum mechanics. This means that we can in fact apply the scientific method of inquiry into the theological enterprise. Jesus can only be understood in the 'spatialized context' within which he occurs, namely, the Jewish context. Just as we can never grasp the behaviour of light if we remove it from the complicated scientific matrix of quantum physics, so also with Jesus.⁶² We have no hope of understanding Him if He is utterly removed from his Jewish context, as we have done in contextualization in Pacific Theology. It is only within his Jewish context, in first century Palestine, that we can hope to grasp the reality of the Jesus. That is to say, we have no freedom to.

treat Jesus, as Dr. Havea argued, as a timeless truth.

In as much as he is the figure mediated by the biblical text, Jesus has a particular space-time dimension within which we can seek to truly understand him: by engaging in dialogue with him as he is presented to us in the Bible. For in that context Jesus confronts us men where we are in space and time, organizing the space-time structure of His human nature and life in relation to our existence in such a way that we are able to know the Father He reveals through Himself the Son, and are able also to say of the Man Jesus Christ that what He is towards us in divine acts of forgiveness, regeneration and sanctification, He is in Himself, antecedently, inherently and eternally. He is God of God, as well as Man of man.⁶³

On the other hand, to construe Jesus, as has been done in Pacific Theology thus far, by abstracting Him from the 'field of force set up by God in the Incarnation', and thus isolating Him from the whole interrelatedness of creation and redemption, then it is no wonder that we find Him a stumbling block rather than a foundation to our theological formulations.

Secondly, contextualization in Pacific Theology is driven by an illegitimate historical method. Again, I am still concerned at this instance with the process of transporting the 'faith' into the 'local soil' of the Pacific, which Dr. Havea proposed and which is currency in Pacific Theology. This process is in itself an illegitimate historical approach and has long ago been manifested for what it is by Schweitzer when he said that

'it is not given to history to disengage that which is abiding and eternal in the being of Jesus from the historical forms in which it worked itself out, and to introduce it into our world as a living influence. It has toiled in vain at this undertaking. As a water-plant is beautiful so long as it is growing in the water, but once torn from its roots, withers and becomes unrecognizable, so it is with the historical Jesus when He is



wrenched loose from the soil of eschatology, and the attempt is made to conceive Him “historically” as a Being not subject to temporal conditions’.⁶⁴

What has produced the ‘Pacific Christ’ has been a wrenching loose of the historical Jesus from the ‘soil of eschatology’, so that he became a ‘Being not subject to temporal conditions’. This is in effect what Dr. Havea meant by defining Pacific Theology as ‘an effort to put faith and the Gospel in the local soil and context so that they can exist in the local climate’.⁶⁵ In attempting to ‘put faith and the Gospel in the local soil and context’, the Gospel has been, as I have mentioned above, wrongly supposed to be a ‘western Gospel’ nurtured in a ‘western theological pod’. This has never been the case. The Gospel is rather about the particular person, Jesus of Nazareth who, is been grounded in the ‘eschatological soil’ of the whole Bible.

The effort of Pacific Theology to put faith in the local soil then has resulted, according to Schweitzer, in the ‘Jesus of the gospel’ withering and becoming unrecognizable. Thus the ‘Pacific Christ’ of Pacific Theology tells us more about ourselves and our Pacific surroundings, our cultures and customs than the Jesus who is both ‘Lord and Christ’ seated at the right hand of God the Father until his enemies are made his footstool (Acts 2:33-36). Here the major weakness of Pacific Theology coincides with the weakness of so much of modern theology, namely, that it reduces the knowledge of God ‘to a speaking *about* ourselves or our supposed experience rather than *from* the God made known in Christ’.⁶⁶

Thirdly, contextualization in Pacific Theology has been driven by an un-Spiritual method. As I have mentioned above, the noble aim of Pacific Theology has been to make the Christian faith relevant and meaningful to us in the Pacific region. In other words, it is an effort to apply the message of the gospel to us in the Pacific in ways and symbols comprehensible to us. The Bible tells us that it is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the gospel message to our hearts and thus to

bring us hope for the glory that is soon to be revealed in us Christians when we see the Lord Jesus (Rom.5:2-5; 8:17-25). Thus far, the effort of Pacific Theology, to transport the 'faith' and the 'Gospel', has overlooked the spiritual dimension of our faith. Not only is it necessary for the Spirit of God to convict us of sin, of righteousness and of judgement (Jn.16:7-8), but it is also God the Father who reveals to us who the Son truly is (Mat.16:17; cf. 11:27; Gal.1:16).

Of course, it remains useful and important for us Pacific theologians to continue to apply appropriate cultural equivalents to bring home the gospel. But it will remain a matter of conjecture and debate for us to consider the question, '*What if* Christ was born a Pacific islander?' A more important question for us to ask will always be, '*What is* the meaning of the Scriptures (God has chosen, in his wisdom and grace, to give us), to us in the Pacific today?'

As we work in this assignment, let us never make it a mere human academic exercise. The promise of Jesus that 'the Spirit will guide you into all truth' (Jn.16:13) assures us that the same Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, will always wonderfully open its stories to our understanding for every culture in every age.⁶⁷

Moreover, while contextualization in Pacific Theology is an effort to make the gospel truths relevant to us in the Pacific, the Holy Spirit is the power of God who reveals Christ to us, so that to save us and to transform us into his likeness (Rom.8:9-11). From God's viewpoint, this is the most basic need of mankind. Our deepest need is not for relevancy with relation to the gospel message, but rather to be saved from this evil age and this is what God did by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful mankind (Gal.1:1-4; Rom.8:3). Thus in Pacific Theology's effort to make the gospel relevant, it has made it utterly irrelevant to us all. It is not surprising then that people at the grassroots level do not find any of their theological derivations appealing, for they do not address them at their most ultimate need – the need to be rescued from this evil age!

The fundamental flaw of constitutive principle # 2: A 'gospel' which is no gospel at all.

Having offered my critical evaluation of the first constitutive element of Pacific Theology, I now turn to do the same to the theological derivations which have become the content of what is now known amongst Pacific theologians as 'local theologies'. This is the second constitutive element of Pacific Theology. I shall group those theological constructions under one 'umbrella', namely, the 'gospel of the Pacific Christ'. This is because, the way in which these deliberations are proposed is, as if they are in fact the product of the teaching of the Christ, having grown up in the 'local context' of the Pacific. Pacific Theology, in other words, is the attempt of theologians in the Pacific region to construct by imagination the teachings of Jesus Christ, had he grown up in the Pacific context. I shall propose two critiques here of these theological constructions.

First, since Pacific theologians seem to all agree that human experience is the *locus classicus* of the Pacific Theological enterprise,⁶⁸ they have, in fact, reduced theology into anthropology and are, therefore, relentlessly seeking to make its existence justifiable by giving reflections on contemporary issues in the Pacific.⁶⁹ Traditionally speaking, *theology* is the *logos* about the *theos*, but this notion has received a fundamental alteration at the minds of Pacific theologians to become the *logos* about *anthropos*. To speak about the human experience of God is not the same as speaking about God. It is in fact, to speak about the 'human experience' but with a religious nuance, namely, *of God*. However one wants to speak about our experience of God as Pacific islanders, we should not confuse the issue by asserting (wholeheartedly as in the case of Pacific theologians) that we are therefore speaking about God, when in reality, we are not.⁷⁰

In this sense, the error of Pacific Theology is similar to that of nineteenth century Protestantism. According to Barth, 'the 19th century theologians focused their attention on one particular point in relation to all the various world views of their time: man's supposedly innate and essential capacity to "sense and taste the infinite" as Schleiermacher said...'.⁷¹

In the case of Pacific theologians, they have in fact become more interested in the Christian faith than in the Christian message. Speaking in terms of the content of theology proper, moreover, they are more interested in man's relationship to God than in God's dealings with man. As Melancthon puts it, they are focussing "more in the *beneficia Christi* than in Christ Himself".⁷² Thus, insofar as the interest of our theologians in the Pacific is captivated by the commerce of the believing man, by his past and his present, by his confrontation and association and by his experience of Jesus Christ rather than in Christ Himself. It is a theology which has taken its starting point from 'below' rather than from 'above', from humanity rather than from Jesus Christ who, as one of my colleagues puts it, is the *theos-logos par excellence* and who is therefore, the proper subject of Christian theology.⁷³

In fact, the local theologies of Pacific theologians insofar as they remain the products of theological constructions of the supposedly Pacific Christ, are anthropocentric gospels. Thus the Christian gospel message about Jesus Christ has been reduced to a message about Christian self-awareness. Moreover, the message about God confronting man, calling him into account for his sins and dealing redemptively with him as Lord, has been reduced to noncommittal statements, resulting from an uncritical and irresponsible subservience of theological speculations to the patterns, forces and movements of the Pacific natural surroundings, culture and civilization. In the final analysis, Pacific Theology, in its present state, has no real message to offer than 'human' and 'religious' statements, derived from our multi-faceted inner experiences as Pacific people. But since our inner experience does not provide a firm foundation for a critical evaluation of cultural and natural phenomena, that have become foundational for Pacific Theology, we are being deprived of a guiding principle for our theological reflections. Thus, Pacific theologians could turn to whatever impressions and influences from their natural and cultural contexts that proved strongest.

In addition to that, since Pacific theologians speak about Christianity as a religion based on our cultural experience as Pacific islanders, we therefore undermine the missiological and the evangelistic aspect of



Christianity. Since the message of the 'Pacific Christ' is a culture-specific message, arising from a particular culture and which is solely comprehensible to people from such a culture, namely, Pacificans, we are, therefore, left with no gospel message to communicate to people beyond our own cultural milieu. Entertainment, rather than repentance, has, therefore, become the main thrust of Pacific theologians' theological constructions. Their theological constructions are displayed for impression rather than leading people ultimately to repentance. In that sense, what we call local theologies can be more correctly rendered as 'local religious anthropologies'.

Consequently, all the energies of Pacific theology have been captivated by the world – their own world as Pacificans! Its theology speaks univocally with the world because it belongs to the world and so has nothing new to offer to the Pacific world. Attempts have been made to describe social, ecological, political, and economic problems from a purely worldly perspective. Biblical concepts are re-defined from a purely human standpoint. The concept of 'sin' is thus described as 'being content with the [ecological] status quo [of the Pacific] in spite of the problems'.⁷⁴ In order to understand the problems we are being confronted with, we are summoned to 'search the people' rather than to search the Scriptures.⁷⁵ The identity of Jesus Christ is not to be derived from the reliable testimony of the Scriptures, but rather from the 'movements in the life of our communities and nations' in the Pacific.⁷⁶ Even death is no longer seen as the judgement of God for sins (Gen.2:17, Rom.5:12-21; 6:23), but as a contribution to 'ingroup feelings and family cohesion'.⁷⁷

It is not surprising then, that in all the extant publicised work of Pacific theologians, they have achieved very little in terms of a new and positive understanding of Christian truth and truths in themselves. Since it has ascribed normative character to the ideas of both its physical and cultural environment, it has been forced to make reductions and oversimplifications, to indulge in forgetfulness and carelessness in dealing with the exciting and all-important matters of Christian understanding.

Thus, in the present state of theology in the Pacific, there is indeed an

impoverishment and triviality forced into it by these outside forces. One is therefore bound to search in vain through the many issues of the *Pacific Journal of Theology* for a discussion of exegetical issues which can be of direct relevance to the fulfilment of one's ministerial responsibility of preaching the biblical gospel to the Sunday congregation, despite the claim made in its policy statement to 'include helpful material for pastors and church workers'. If, on the other hand, something is claimed to be useful to the parish minister in the Journal, it is frequently bound to be irrelevant to the laity. Such is the fate of Pacific Theology, under the operation of its present methodology.

In this respect, Dr. Knox's prophetic remarks about the faults of modern Christians hold true in our present situation in the Pacific when he says,

As a whole it is true to say that we modern Christians have relaxed our trust in God as Sovereign Lord, the Creator and Controller of all. We have relaxed our belief in God's holiness, and thus in his judgement, in spite of the fact that the Bible clearly says that God's judgement is so complete that every idle word will come up for examination. We have relaxed our conviction on the centrality of Jesus Christ in history, Jesus who came from God to be our Saviour, who is the one through whom God has come into a relationship with mankind for the purpose of blessing and salvation. "As a man thinks, so he is" (Pro.23:7). Our modern Christianity has become weak in faith and, as a result, is flabby in witness. It has no real message to the God-forgetting society around us. As individuals, we engage in little personal evangelism, and as congregations we have a very weak witness.⁷⁸

One only needs to replace the terms 'modern Christians' and 'modern Christianity' with 'Pacific theologians' and 'Pacific Christianity' and Dr.



Knox's remark will be as much applicable to us in the Pacific, as it is to modern Christianity in general. Indeed, the 'local theologies' which we are so ardently proclaiming in the Pacific have, I am sad to say, "no real message" to offer to the "God-forgetting" society around us.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it may appear obvious in this paper that I am not following the rule *De mortuis nihil nisi bene* ("Speak nothing but good of the dead"), simply because Dr. Havea, the father of Pacific Theology, is not dead; he will not cease to speak to us and we cannot cease to listen to him. In one of his theological reflections, Dr. Havea recollects sitting through a prize-giving ceremony at one of our secondary schools in Tonga in which the best student-farmer in the school was presented with a cane knife as his prize. He noticed that the student was not extremely happy about his prize. Later, Dr. Havea told him, 'Make good use of the knife'. This student-farmer ended up being the most successful farmer in Tonga.

Now, in contrast to this story, the contextual methodology that was set forth by Dr. Havea and has been indiscriminately utilized in the Pacific up to now, is like the student-farmer's 'cane knife'. We have made 'good use' of it, but it has not yielded theological 'fruits', beneficial to the local churches in the Pacific. Why not? Because the 'tool' we have been putting into operation is profoundly unfitting for the proper operation of the Christian theological enterprise. A 'cane knife' is indeed a useful item for heavy duty operations like cutting grass and even trees. But for the appropriate implementation of surgical procedure for a 'heart transplant', a 'cane knife' is but an inappropriate instrument, while a scalpel can do the job with incomparable preciseness. Of course, such a surgical procedure can be executed with a 'cane knife', but the result will do more harm than good to the heart patient.

Metaphorically speaking, Christ, the *theos-logos*, came into the world to give us a 'heart transplant'. In the first chapter of his Gospel, John describes Jesus as the 'Word became flesh' (Jn.1:14) and also him being the 'Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world' (Jn.1:29, 36).

Since the main purpose of Jesus' coming is to save the world, then it should also be the main purpose of Christian theology. In order for it to be true to a designation as such, it is to lead people towards *metanoia* ("repentance"). The consistent failure of Pacific Theology, reflected in the various forms of 'local theologies' constructed by Pacific theologians, to put this biblical aim into effect, means that what we are doing in the Pacific may be 'theology' in some sense of the term, but it is far from being Christian theology. It is my firm conviction that for Christian theology to continue to be faithfully propagated in the Pacific region, the current methodology has to be superseded by something more in line with the purpose of the *ho (theos) logos sarx egeneto... ho airon ten hamartian tou kosmou* ("the Word [of God or *theology*] became flesh... [to become] the bearer the sin of the world").⁷⁹ But that is the subject for another day. *Soli Deo gloria*.⁸⁰

Notes

- 1 Several friends have contributed to this essay by reading various drafts of it, criticizing and encouraging, making suggestions of all sorts, and generally enabling me to bring this essay into a more publishable form. These include Rev. Dr. S. Yule of the Department of Theology at Sia'atoutai, Rev. Sam Manu, formerly of the Queen Salote College, Tonga, Mr. I. Hutchinson of the English Department at Sia'atoutai and Leon Boois who is working as an English teacher in Turkey. The many weaknesses that this essay still has are entirely my own.
- 2 See S. 'A. Havea, 'Foreword' in *South Pacific Theology: Papers from the Consultation on Pacific Theology*, Papua New Guinea, January 1986 (Parramatta: Regnum, 1987) 7.
- 3 Cited in I.S. Tuwere, 'An Agenda for the Theological Task of the Church in Oceania' *PJT* 2:13 (1995) 8.
- 4 See S. 'A. Havea, 'Christianity in the Pacific Context' in *South Pacific Theology: Papers from the Consultation on Pacific Theology*, Papua New Guinea, January 1986 (Parramatta: Regnum, 1987) 12.
- 5 See Havea, 'Christianity', 12.
- 6 See Havea, 'Christianity', 13.
- 7 See Havea, 12. My italics.
- 8 See A.J. Torrance, 'Introduction' in *Christ and Context: The Confrontation between Gospel and Culture* (eds.) I.I.D. Regan et al (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993) 4.
- 9 That the Pacific theologians are the present embodiments of the 'Pacific Christ' is



- a point implicitly made by Dr. Havea in his 1989 Pacific Theological College Graduation Address. See S.A. Havea., 'The Theology of Giving – A Celebration: 1989 Pacific Theological College Graduation Address' *PJT* 2:3 (1990) 10-15.
- 10 See Havea, 'Christianity', 14-15.
 - 11 See I.S.Tuwere., 'He Began in Galilee and Now He is Here: Thoughts for a Pacific Ocean Theology' *PJT* 2:3 (1990) 4-9 and also Tuwere, 'Agenda', 9-11.
 - 12 See K.A.Kanongata'a., 'A Pacific Women's Theology of Birthing and Liberation' *PJT* 2:7 (1992) 3-11.
 - 13 See J.Meo., 'Smallness and Solidarity' *PJT* 2:6 (1991) 91-96.
 - 14 See Havea, 'Christianity', 13-14. See also Havea, 'Giving', 10-15.
 - 15 See L.Boseto., 'The Gospel of Economy From a Solomon Islands Perspective' *PJT* 2:8 (1992) 79-84.
 - 16 See K.Mafaufau., 'Pacific Time and the Times: A Theological Reflection' *PJT* 2:6 (1991) 22-29.
 - 17 See P.Koria., 'Moving Towards a Pacific Theology: Theologising with Concepts' *PJT* 2:22 (1999) 2-14.
 - 18 See Havea, 'Christianity' 13-14.
 - 19 For other examples of Pacific 'theologies' see K.Solomone., 'Ecumenism in Oceania' *PJT* 2:24 (2000) 98-101. See also Tuwere, 'Agenda', 8.
 - 20 See my 'Pacific Theology' *PJT* 2:28 (2002) 21-53.
 - 21 Concerning 'local Pacific theology', Dr.Solomone writes, 'Today results are beginning to show not only in the way local church leaders are speaking about the Gospel[,] but also in the way the people understand it and in worship'. See K.Solomone, 'Ecumenism in Oceania' *PJT* 2:24 (2000) 98.
 - 22 Most of the elderly ministers of the Free Wesleyan of Tonga, for instance, can still remember the 1984 Annual General Conference of the Church when the late Dr. Havea, the then President of the Church and Chairperson of the Conference, proposed that coconut flesh and juice be used instead of the traditional elements of the Lord's Supper. It did not take long for the meeting to agree that such a proposition was highly impractical and thus was unacceptable to the majority of the church members who consisted mostly of lay people. I am indebted here to information provided by Rev. Dr. 'Ahio in a private conversation.
 - 23 See M.Erickson., *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 56.
 - 24 See H.Bruce., *A Mind for What Matters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 279.
 - 25 See D.A.Carson., 'The Role of Exegesis in Systematic Theology' in *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honour of Kenneth S.Kantzer* (eds.) J.D.Woodbridge & T.L.McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 41, 43 *His italics*.
 - 26 See A.Refa., 'The Influence of the Missionaries on Samoan Culture' *PJT* 2:61 (1991) 30-33; H.J.Hoioire., 'Elements of an Ethic of Pacific/ Oceania Theologising' *PJT* 2:13 (1995) 49-59; K.Solomone., 'One Gospel: Contextually Inclusive and/or Exclusive' *PJT* 2:17 (1997) 7-23; A. Tofacfono., 'Editorial' *PJT* 2:27 (2002) 1-6.

- 27 See the summary of the teachings of the missionaries who came to Tonga, for instance, in S.J.atukefu., *Church and State in Tonga: The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and Political Development, 1822-1875* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1974) 53.
- 28 See Havea, 'Christianity', 11.
- 29 See Latukefu, 68-82 for a fuller account of the kind of 'contextualization' of the nineteenth century missionaries to Tonga.
- 30 See Havea, 12 and Hoire, 51.
- 31 See D.Tovey, 'Narrative Strategies in the Prologue and the Metaphor of ho logos in John's Gospel' *Pacifica* 15 (2002) 138-153. Tovey helpfully argues that ho logos and houtos in Jn.1:1-18 functions to create a strong link in the implied reader's mind that the identity of the logos is inescapably the person Jesus who is being introduced in v.17.
- 32 Here I am drawing on Jesus' use of the Greek word dei in explaining his impending death to his disciples to affirm that He has the cross as his ultimate destiny (Mat.16:21; Mk.8:31; Lk.9:22, cf. v.51).
- 33 See Havea, 12.
- 34 See T.T.M.Puloka, 'Sisu Tonga: Vaofi'a e Vamama'o' Unpublished Notes.
- 35 See S.Tu'ivai, 'Ko e ha hono maumau'o e Sisu Tonga' *Kalonikali Tonga*. In a personal conversation with Tu'ivai, he gave me permission to make reference to him in my presentation.
- 36 Tu'ivai went as far as naming individuals such as King George Tupou I who might be included in the list of 'Tongan Jesuses'.
- 37 See D.Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Centre*. (tr.) E.H.Robertson (New York: Harper and Row, 1978) 76.
- 38 See Havea, 13.
- 39 See I.H.Helu., *Critical Essays: Cultural Perspectives from the South Seas*. (Canberra: ANU, 1999) 75.
- 40 I am referring here to his Graduation Address at the graduation ceremony of Atenisi University in 2000. See also Helu, 'Critical', 105.
- 41 See Helu, 'Critical', 105.
- 42 See D.B.Knox., *Selected Works: Volume 1. The Doctrine of God* (ed.) T.Payne (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2000) 154.
- 43 For the Trinitarian approach to Theology, see Knox, 'Works' Part 1; C.E.Gunton., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997 2nd edn.); J.D.Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985); T.F.Torrance., *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).
- 44 Cf. N.J.Geisler., *Creating God in the Image of Man?* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1997). Geisler, however, is responding to the challenge of 'neotheism'.
- 45 See A.Schweitzer., *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (tr.) W.Montgomery (London: SCM, 3rd edn., 1954) 4.
- 46 See G.Hunsinger., 'Afterword: Hans Frei as Theologian' in H.Frei., *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays* (eds.) G.Hunsinger & W.Placher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 239.



- 47 Cited by Hunsinger, 239.
- 48 I am using Dr. Haevea's category here, namely, that the 'theologians' are those who have graduated from the Pacific Theological College. See Haevea, 'Giving' 10-15.
- 49 See G.Loughlin., *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology*. (Cambridge University Press, 1996); M. Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981). See also H.H'erei., 'Response to "Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal"' in H.H'erei., *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays* (eds) G.Hunsinger & W.C.Placher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 207-212.
- 50 Barnett argues that this passage is part of an early Christian creed whose origin can be dated back to Jesus himself. See P.W.Barnett., 'The Jesus of History is the Christ of Faith: Romans 1:3-4' Anglican Media Website (Sept. 2001).
- 51 See H.H'erei., *The Identity of Jesus Christ: Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 27.
- 52 Cited by Hunsinger, 243.
- 53 See J.D.G.Dunn., *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1980). I am indebted here to two reviews of Dunn's work; see G.L.Bray., 'Recent Trends in Christology' *ERT* 12:1 (1988) 55 and K.R.Trembath., 'Evangelicals and Biblical Inspiration' *ERT* 12:1 (1988) 35. See also Barnett, 2001.
- 54 Here, I have Dr. Puloka's 'Vaofi'a e Vamama'o' in view.
- 55 See Puloka, 'Sisu Tonga'.
- 56 See T.F.Torrance., *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969) 72.
- 57 See Haevea, 'Christianity', 11.
- 58 See T.F.Torrance., *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992) 1.
- 59 See Torrance, 'Mediator', 1.
- 60 See Torrance, 'Mediator', 2-3.
- 61 Torrance, 'Mediator', 3.
- 62 See Torrance, 'Space' 76-77.
- 63 See Torrance, 'Space', 80.
- 64 See Schweitzer, 399.
- 65 See Haevea, 'Christianity', 11.
- 66 See Gunton, 193. His italics.
- 67 I am indebted here to comments made by Mr. Ian Hutchinson of the English Department at Sia'atoutai.
- 68 This is Sr. Kanongata'a's conclusion which warranted Dr. Mco's approval in a more recent issue of PJT. See Sr. K.A.Kanongata'a., 'Why Contextual?' *PJT* 2:27 (2002) 37. See also J.Mco., 'How do we do Contextual Theology?' *PJT* 2:27 (2002) 59.
- 69 For instance, and entire issue of the *PJT* was devoted to addressing the issue of 'Globalisation'. See *PJT* 2:24 (2000). While there may good intentions in attempts as such, the question remains as to how does a deeper understanding of the exigencies of our terrestrial existence assist us to know God, the Heavenly Father better? Have we not fully immersed ourselves in 'civilian affairs' and as a result, we fail to be pleasing to our 'commanding officer' (cf. 2

- Tim.2:2).
- 70 I have in view the essays by Sr. Kanongata'a and Dr. Meo to which previous reference has been made, as two wonderful examples.
 - 71 See K.Barth., *The Humanity of God* (John Knox Press, 1960) 21.
 - 72 Cited in Barth, 'Humanity', 24.
 - 73 I am referring here to Rev. Paula O. Latu's Address to Incoming Students to Sia'atoutai Theological College at the Enrollment Week 2002. An Unpublished Document.
 - 74 See Tuwerc, 'Ocean Theology', 9.
 - 75 See F.X.Hezel., 'The Cruel Dilemma: Money, Economics in the Pacific' *PJT* 2:8 (1992) 21.
 - 76 See P.Niukula., 'Christ at the Centre: Sermon at the Induction of Jovili Meo' *PJT* 2:3 (1990) 26.
 - 77 See A.Yabaki., 'Two Funerals' *PJT* 2:3 (1990) 28-31.
 - 78 See T.Payne (ed.) *D.Broughton Knox Selected Works. Volume I The Doctrine of God* (Kingsford: Matthias Press, 2000) 173.
 - 79 I have set forth the approach I have in mind in a previous publication. See my 'Pacific Theology' *PJT* 2:28 (2002) 21-53. God willing, however, I may be enabled to develop those insights further.
 - 80 I have set forth the approach I have in mind in a previous publication. See my 'Pacific Theology' *PJT* 2:28 (2002) 21-53. God willing, however, I may be enabled to develop those insights further



ATTENTION !



Issue 30 of the Pacific Journal of Theology is mainly sponsored by the Weavers Advocacy Programme of SPATS. The major theme will be on Violence Against Women and Children - A Theological Problem for the Church. You will enjoy reading personal views and reflections of the Contributors. However, if you're interested in contributing something along these lines, it is still not too late - deadline is September, 2003. Call us on 679-330-3924.

Make sure you don't miss out and
get a copy



Jeanette Little

Obituary - Miss Jeanette Little

The Secretariat was informed of the sad news of the death of the late Miss Jeanette Little in Brisbane, Australia recently.

Jeanette will always be remembered by SPATS for the invaluable services she had rendered as Library Consultant under the Accreditation Programme. Before joining SPATS Jeanette was Librarian for the Pacific Theological College for a number of years and she developed that library to be a model library for SPATS member schools. Her expertise and experience were most precious to SPATS in this particular area of work. She travelled around the Pacific region to visit SPATS member schools and offered hands-on librarian support, advice and training of library staff.

Beside being Library Consultant, she also did editing and sub-editing work for the Pacific Journal of Theology. Her wide experience in theological education and her familiarisation with commonly used texts has helped raise the standard of the Journal and assist our Pacific Island authors in preparing materials for an academic journal

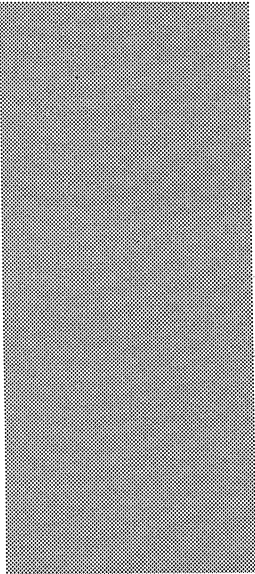
Jeanette had a very caring attitude. In one of her last emails which we received, she was writing from her sick bed



giving us information about an opportunity which SPATS could pursue for libraries in third world countries being entitled to a 50% discount on all products from the American Theological Library Association. That was Jeanette; perhaps D.T. Niles' definition on evangelism ("a beggar telling another beggar where to find bread") would best describe the kind of person she was. Her concern for SPATS member schools' libraries never ceased or wavered when she left our shores to return home. It was with her until she passed away. She will always be in our hearts.

May she rest in Peace.





HIV/AIDS Seminar for SPATS Member Schools

Ethical and Theological Issues Involved

Introduction

Fr. Seluini 'Akau'ola
sm

On October 1990 the late Bishop of Tonga, Bishop Patelisio Finau, addressed the South Pacific Commission Conference in Noumea on the global problem of HIV/AIDS. In his address he said: "Every problem is complex because it touches all the different facets that make up the human person – the physical, the spiritual, the individual, the social, the economic and so on – AIDS is first and foremost a human problem."

This week we gather as member schools of SPATS to discuss this same global problem, the human problem of HIV/AIDS. The member schools represent some of the different Christian churches in our region. The very fact that we are here shows that our Churches are not turning a blind eye to this epidemic that has become a real threat to our own human survival in our mother earth.

When I was doing my studies in Boston back in 1993 I was also Assistant Pastor in a parish in downtown Boston. One evening I noticed people coming to the hall under the church. I asked one of the priests what was going on down in the hall and he told me that one of our priests was conducting a prayer meeting with the HIV/AIDS



victims. The following week I asked the Chaplain for the HIV/AIDS victims if I could attend the prayer session. He gave me permission but cautioned me to be very sensitive because the HIV/AIDS victims were very sensitive to their problems and very selective about those who attend their prayer meeting. It was my firsthand experience relating to people who suffer from HIV/AIDS.

In preparing this paper I had to remind myself a couple of times not to be too sensitive since I am addressing theologians and not victims. Even in joking I still have to be very sensitive. It was a great lesson I had learnt in Boston.

As I was writing this paper I decided to browse through the Internet to see the latest information on HIV/AIDS. It was very informative to learn that there was a big meeting of the UNAIDS/WHO in Barcelona in July on the same topic. The UNAIDS/WHO estimated that the number of people throughout the world living with HIV/AIDS at the end of last year (2001) came to 40,000,000 adults and children. The total number of women between the ages of 15 – 49 who were victims came to 18,500,000 and the children between the ages of 0 – 14 reached 3,000,000. The figures provided showed that the tragic disease orphaned 14,000,000 children at the end of the year 2001. Our Pacific region as you all know is not immune from this global problem. Each of our island nations is struggling to cope with the increasing number of those infected. The HIV/AIDS threat has awakened and even challenged us to take a hard look at our world and more so at our own selves. It awakens us more to what is God saying to us human beings. There are other significant questions we have to deal with. Some of these questions are “Where is God in the midst of this human tragedy” and “What is God asking of us through this human experience?” and also “What is our response as Church and as theological institutes to this life threatening epidemic?” I believe we are facing a huge challenge to our Christian call and vocation. Let me try and look at this from the challenge posed to us by the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God and its challenge

Jesus Christ, as we all know, is the 'autobasileia' or the embodiment of the Kingdom of God. When he began his ministry in Galilee he proclaimed the Good News from God: "*The time has come and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.*" (Mk.1:15) It is the person of Jesus who is close at hand and his closeness challenges us to repentance and belief in his own person. He is the kingdom of God in the flesh. At the end of his ministry, after the resurrection, he gave this mission to his disciples:

Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.

The nature of this mission is religious. Jesus did not give his disciples and to us a political mission, nor an economic mission, and not even a medical mission. At the heart of his mission is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Whatever ministry we may be called to undertake it must flow from this mission which we all believe was given to the Apostles and to the Church. We cannot afford to run ministries parallel to the mission given by Jesus that is religious in nature. Our pastoral activities must flow from the inner nature of this mission and what it means to be Church.

In the Gospel according to St Matthew, Jesus told his disciples: *The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.* (Mtt. 13:33) We learn from this text that the nature of the Kingdom of God is to penetrate all aspects of our life. The Kingdom of God challenges all aspects of our life whether they are political, social, intellectual, economic, medical or whatever. In other words the Kingdom of God must leaven all through all aspects



of our life.

You may recall a rich young man, in Matthew's Gospel, who came up to Jesus and asked: *Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?* (Mtt.19:16) Pope John Paul II has something very insightful and interesting about this text in his 1993 encyclical:

In the young man, whom Matthew's Gospel does not name, we can recognize every person who, consciously or not, approaches Christ the Redeemer of all and questions him about morality. For the young man, the question is not so much about rules to be followed, but about the full meaning of life...The question which the rich young man puts to Jesus of Nazareth is one which rises from the depths of his heart. It is an essential and unavoidable question for the life of every person, for it is about the moral good which must be done, and about eternal life. The young man senses that there is a connection between moral good and the fulfillment of his own destiny. He is a devout Israelite, raised as it were in the shadow of the Law of the Lord. If he asks Jesus this question, we can presume that it is not because he is ignorant of the answer contained in the Law. It is more likely that the attractiveness of the person of Jesus had prompted within him new questions about moral good. He feels the need to draw near to the One who had begun his preaching with this new and decisive proclamation: 'The time has come and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

(Veritatis Splendor, nos. 7 & 8)

The question that was asked by the rich young man now becomes the question for us who are present in this seminar. "What must I do?" now becomes "What must we do?" The problems of HIV/AIDS are real and as theological institutes and members of Christian churches we may be interested in another question prior to the "What must we do?" question. Since the question was addressed to the Master, the Teacher, we may be interested in the question "What must we teach?" in order to inspire the "What must we do?" question. But before we teach we must first be open to learning. The secular world has offered us a lot of information to learn from about the reality of the HIV/AIDS. I have mentioned some figures in the beginning as examples. The challenge for us is how do we read and interpret information in the light of our faith.

At the same time there must be reconciliation between the "What must we do?" question and the nature of the religious mission with which Jesus entrusted to us through the apostles. If we are to teach the truth, do the right thing, then we must make sure they flow from the right source, namely, the demands of the Kingdom of God.

I will have to draw insights from the document "*Gaudium et Spes*" of the Second Vatican Council to try and reconcile the question I have raised and the religious nature of the mission given us by Jesus.

The response of the Pastoral Constitution, found in paragraphs 40 – 42, is clear and basic. Fr. J. Bryan Hehir, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, sums it up clearly. The place of the Church in the socio-political order is shaped by the following principles¹:

- a) the ministry of the Church is religious in nature
- b) the religious ministry has its primary object the achievement of the Kingdom of God – the Church is in a unique way the "instrument" of the Kingdom in history
- c) the power of the Kingdom is designed to permeate every dimension of life



- d) as the Church pursues its properly religious ministry, it contributes to four areas of life which have direct social and political consequences
- e) these four religiously rooted but politically significant goals are:
 - i) the defense of human dignity
 - ii) the promotion of human rights
 - iii) the cultivation of the unity of the human family
 - iv) the provision of meaning to every aspect of human activity

It is clear that the religious nature of the mission is directed at the human person and his or her relationship to God. The Kingdom of God is here and now and we are the instruments of the Kingdom. We cannot remain indifferent if we are to be true to our call and the demands of the Kingdom. As instruments we must strive to be effective since service is the spirit and attitude of our Christian call. As teachers we teach and live what we teach. I do understand that no one finds it easy. But our Christian call is a call to growth and to move forward as shown by how Jesus dealt with his disciples more especially Peter.

What must we teach?

A. HIV/AIDS and human dignity

Each individual person has been created in the image of God. This is our central belief regarding the dignity of the human person, the transcendental dimension of the human person. The dignity of the human person has a spiritual dimension because it links to God. As instruments of the Kingdom we must promote human dignity and guard it against any form of violence, discrimination, abuses and other vices. We deal with spiritual matters and we must not allow the dignity of the human person to be degraded through political oppression,

economic deprivation, and even discrimination of HIV/AIDS victims and patients.

William E. May in his book *An Introduction to Moral Theology* explains two kinds of human dignity in accordance with Catholic tradition. There is a twofold dignity proper to human beings: one is intrinsic and an endowment or gift; the other is also intrinsic, but it is an achievement or acquisition².

The first dignity proper to human beings is the dignity that is theirs simply as members of the human species, which God called into existence when, in the beginning, God "created man in his own image ... male and female he created them." (Gen.1: 27)

This intrinsic, inalienable dignity proper to human beings is God's gift, in virtue of which every human being, of whatever age or sex or condition, is a being of moral worth, an irreplaceable and nonsubstitutable person. Because of this dignity a human being, as Karol Wojtyla (now Pope John Paul II) has said, "is the kind of good that does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such a means to an end."³

The second kind of dignity to which we are called as intelligent and free persons capable of determining our own lives by our own free choices. This is the dignity that we are to give to ourselves (with the help of God's unfailing grace) by freely choosing to shape our lives and actions in accord with the truth. In other words, we give to ourselves this dignity and inwardly participate in it by making good moral choices, and such choices are in turn dependent upon true moral judgments.

This dignity is acquired by diligently seeking the truth about what we are to do if we are to be fully the beings we are meant to be and by shaping our lives freely in accordance with this truth⁴.

Our deep understanding of human dignity calls forth both solidarity and compassion towards and with the victims of HIV/AIDS. We are talking here about commitment that expresses itself in action rather than being just sympathetic. We are called to have a human heart for



our brothers and sisters who face misery, who experience suffering and the loneliness and isolation from this tragic disease. Jesus is our model of compassion. Our Christian response to the suffering and misery experienced by our brothers and sisters is to remain in solidarity and yet find a way to eliminate their suffering and misery. As human beings they have rights that are inalienable. The victims of HIV/AIDS are human beings with rights that cannot be removed unjustly.

B. HIV/AIDS and human rights

The human persons are born with rights that flow from his/her dignity as a person created in the image of God. These rights are written in Constitutions of many countries and even in Christian Church's constitutions. Let me take the Catholic Church and the UN International Bill of Rights as examples.

Any human society, if it is to be well ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely that every human being is a person, that is, his/her nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he/she is a person he/she has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his/her very nature. And as these rights are universal and inviolable, so they cannot in any way be surrendered. (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, no. 9)

With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome as contrary to God's intent. (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 29)

The International Bill on Human Rights

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The defense of human rights flows from the nature of the religious mission entrusted to us. It is within the nature of the demands of the Kingdom of God.

All victims of HIV/AIDS cannot lose their basic human rights simply because they suffer from such tragic disease. Their dignity and rights remain intact despite the disease. All HIV/AIDS patients have rights to be treated medically and cared for without discrimination. The American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians, and several individuals considering the topic declare that because medicine is a profession, individual physicians and healthcare workers have ethical and legal responsibilities to care for HIV/AIDS patients⁵.

Justice demands that each person is given his/her due and his/her due is his/her basic rights. Pope John Paul II, in his Address to the United Nations in 1979, spoke of some of the most important and universally recognized human rights:

1. right to life, liberty and security of person
2. the right to food, clothing, housing, sufficient health care, rest, leisure
3. the right to freedom of expression, education, and culture
4. the right to freedom of thought conscience, and religion



5. the right to manifest one's religion either individually or in community, in public or in private
6. the right to choose a state of life, to found a family and to enjoy all conditions necessary for family life
7. the right to property and work, to adequate working conditions and a just wage
8. the right of assembly and association
9. the right to freedom of movement, to internal and external migration
10. the right to nationality and residence
11. the political system of the people to which one belongs

The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of justice, peace and joy. As instruments of the kingdom of God we are also instruments of justice and through our baptism we share in the prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ. Our prophetic role demands moral courage on our part as we deal with this epidemic.

C. HIV/AIDS and Human Sexuality and Marriage

We have come to know more about the different ways people can contract the disease. One of the most common ways is through sexual intercourse and some other forms of genital acts. In trying to combat this killer disease the secular world offers instructions on "safe sex," or rather "safer sex," and the use of condoms for promiscuous sex. The solution is focused on prevention while highlighting pleasure and the hedonistic attitude. It does not encourage sexual integration and the living of good moral life.

Intimacy is a basic human need and it must be adequately addressed and met. The usual reaction to an unmet need is that of anger. When

one is hungry and when he/she is denied of food he/she reacts out of anger. Similarly when the human person fails to address his/her need for intimacy he/she reacts out of anger. The beauty of the human sexuality is geared towards love and the formation of the human person in love. Sometimes the need for intimacy is confused with the desire for the pleasure of sex.

The two dimensions of our human sexuality are the affective and the genital. The genital act is one part of the genital dimension. Human sexuality is who we are as persons with our sexual identity. The focus on “safe sex” is really out of proportion to the whole meaning of our human sexuality. The affective dimension gives meaning to the genital act simply because it is an expression of true, authentic love. But the true meaning of sexual intercourse is found only within marriage. It involves commitment rather than casual relationship and pleasure seeking. The true meaning of human sexuality and marriage must be promoted rather than the promotion of “safe sex” and the use of condoms.

There is a need to encourage sexual integration into the personality of the human person. As Christians we are reminded of the call to chastity. The US Bishops write that human integrity requires the practice of authentic chastity. Chastity is understood as the virtue by which one person integrates one’s sexuality according to the moral demands of one’s state in life. As we strive to face the challenge of this killer disease we must not lose sight of the true meaning of the human person as an integrated person. The complexity and beauty of the creation of the human person must be upheld. The “safe sex” and condom mentality do not capture the deep meaning of human sexuality and marriage.

There is a question that we have to deal with and that is what happens when a man and a woman who have contracted the disease decide to marry. Is it morally right for them to marry? If they do is it morally right for them to have children? Will the act of love be truly act of love or an act of homicide or just irresponsible act? The presence of the disease does not remove the basic natural right to marriage. The one who contracts the disease has to make good moral, responsible choice. There need to be transparency between the two regarding the disease

prior to marriage.

D. HIV/AIDS and the cultivation of human unity and meaning of human activity

Our Christian churches must continue to cultivate, promote and foster unity among all people. It means any form of discrimination and segregation of HIV/AIDS victims must be condemned as morally unacceptable.

While the Kingdom of God is here and now we also believe that the fullness of the Kingdom will be revealed with the coming of Christ for the final judgment of this world. This is the eschatological period and we live with the eschatological hope. The Kingdom of God demands that our human activities contribute to the perfection of our world as we move towards the fullness of the Kingdom in the eschaton.

We are reminded of the reality of sin and the fact that God sends to us his only beloved Son is enough indication that God does not take our sins lightly. However it is vitally important not to run into the conclusion that the killer epidemic we are faced with is God's punishment for the sin of sexual promiscuity. The Gospel steers us away from any distinction between merited and unmerited suffering. Lest we run into the danger of making the wrong conclusion Jesus confronts us with the stories of the man born blind (Jn. 9: 2f). *"Neither he nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered, "he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

Conclusion

The time frame and the limited space mean I must draw a conclusion. It may be necessary to stop and remind us to wake up. In Psalm 44 people say "Wake up, Lord! Why are you asleep?" But is God asleep while we encounter the real threat of this killer disease? We can easily project our problem to God and even blame God rather than asking whether our Christian churches and theological institutes are asleep. I have raised some ethical and theological issues and yet there are many others. It is my hope that this paper serves to evoke some other insights

so as to contribute to our seminar and the deliberation in this field. Let us remain vigilant and face the challenge with courage.

The care and concern for those who suffer from HIV/AIDS is a demand made upon us by the Kingdom of God and the ministry flows out of the religious mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ. The dignity and the rights of the human person must be promoted and defended when under attack. We do it because our religious ministry demands that we promote and defend the image of God, the transcendental dimension and religious aspect of the human person. But we cannot narrow down the mystery of God's creation to one aspect. When one dimension is affected the whole person is affected. I have tried to address the question "What must we teach?" in this paper but as for the question "What must we do?" I will leave it to this seminar and to all.

Notes

- ¹ J. Bryan Hehir, "The Peace Pastoral and Global Mission: Development beyond Vatican II," *The Church & Culture since Vatican II*, ed. Joseph Gremillion (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1985), p. 100
- ² William E. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1994), p. 23
- ³ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. Willets (New York: Farrar, Starus, and Giroux, 1981), p. 41
- ⁴ William E. May, p. 24
- ⁵ Benedict M. Ashley, OP, and Kevin D. O'Rourke, OP, *Healthcare Ethics: A Theological Analysis*, (St. Louis, MO: The Catholic Health Association of the United States, 1989), p. 81



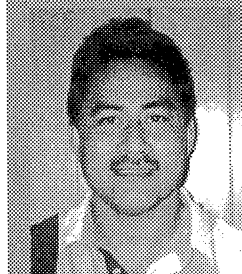
Religion and Science Dialogue in Post-Modernity

Introduction

The advanced course of scientific and technological revolutions has brought about enormous challenges in the contemporary era. Secularization accelerates, and this process is partly exemplified by the vast discoveries of genetic experiments. The results of these experiments are, on the one hand, at times promising for the natural world, while on the other hand, they create confusion and disorientation for human beings. The place and the role of women and men in the postmodern world amidst these revolutions therefore needs to be examined and re-appropriated.

We must begin by acknowledging that the majority of the human race are still ill-informed or yet to be exposed to these postmodern issues. These discoveries and developments therefore need to be met with significant guidelines and paradigmatic shifts in convictions and orientations, particularly in terms of our human search for Truth.

This article features some of the basic interweaving components of the religious and scientific revolutions of our age. It is based on the author's experiences of two



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advanced workshops on the dialogue of Theology and Natural Sciences.¹ The first workshop was held at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia, on 22nd to the 29th January 2002. The participants were drawn to deliberate on the central theme, **Creation and Complexity: Interdisciplinary Issues in Science and Religion**. The second workshop was held at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts from 29th June to 03rd July, 2002. The focus was specifically on the theme, **Truth in Science, Truth in Religion**.

Objectives of the Workshops

The participants in both advanced workshops (consisting mostly of scientists, biologists, astronomers, teachers, university professors and students, social workers, pastors and theologians) were drawn into a fruitful exchange of ideas on the two central themes. While both workshops had a special thematic emphasis in terms of aims and goals, it is apparent that the common denominator of these gatherings of scientific and religious thinkers was the provision of a forum whereby prominent inter-related issues could be exposed through presentations, seminars and intensive discussions.

For some time in recent human history, Theology and Science have been considered enemies. Faith and scientific evolutions have, for the most part, not welcomed each other. The majority of the people of faith even today perceive scientific and technological developments as a threat to religious teachings and beliefs. At the same time, scientific and technological studies at times disregard religious teachings and beliefs as they are mostly viewed as hindrances to their fundamental convictions and conceptions of progress. This conflict of interests has always led to one being perceived as an enemy or threat to the other.

The attempt of the recent workshops, therefore, was to build dialogue between the coexistential disciplines. This was with the hope that a reconciliatory process between Theology and Science could enrich each discipline's faith in the holistic process of life.

It was the hope that, at the end of the workshops, the participants



could learn from each discipline and build bridges between religious faiths and natural scientific developments. At the same time, the aim was to more appropriately implement the results of scientific and technological revolutions in ways that could be complementary to the religious faiths and experience of the world's human communities.

Creation and Complexity

All sides agree that we live in an orderly, beautiful, purposeful, complex and unified creation. The unity of all things created points simultaneously to the diversity of things therein. This means that, within creation's unity, a multi-dimensional plurality has to be recognised and respected. This was disclosed in the series of presentations on creation and complexity at the ANU, Canberra. For example, in his presentation, **"A Surer Path to God or an Absence of God: The Origin of the Universe in Science and Theology,"** David Wilkinson exposed four main theories about the origin of the cosmos and the significant place of the human being therein.

First, the universe is immense and the human being is only a tiny speck in it. The human quest in this regard is always an attempt to search for substantial reasons behind the creation of not only a single planet but a limitless universe. Out of this quest, a notion of God who is beyond mortal conceptions is developed. This idea of God is intimately linked to seeing God as the 'First Cause' or the 'Unmoved Mover.'

The second focal point deals with the view of God as God of the Gaps or Deism. Approached from the Big Bang model, the Nature of Cosmology, the Quantum Theory and the General Theory of Relativity, David Hawkins (and others) pose certain dangers, in the sense that God in these theories is viewed randomly as God of the Gaps. As a way beyond this deficiency, they propose a combination of the Quantum Theory and the General Theory of Relativity, in which the need for 'singularity' is done away with, while 'complexity' is recognised. Hence, Theism rather than Deism is the preferred conception of God.

The third approach draws on the 'Anthropic Balances' theory as

advocated by Paul Davies and others. In the light of the Big Bang Theory, there is a dismissal of the Divine – God. Here the whole cosmos is emptied of God. God as such is an alien. There is an assumption, however, that we can probe beyond any kind of theory and state that there are laws of physics. Additionally, there is *intelligibility* in those laws (Einstein's Logic) which reinstates the fact that the cosmos has a purpose. It is important therefore that the human race recognise the complexity of Anthropic Balances as a way to reconcile conflicts and imbalances in the cosmic operating systems.

The fourth approach is the search for 'Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence.' It maintains that, in the primitive stages of life, 'intelligent aliens' existed, and they continue to exist in the present age. The ashes of the dead stars, for example, could be transformed into amoebas and then to higher life forms. This is one reason why there is always a scientific motivation behind the belief in Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence.

Despite the fact that scientific revolutions provide 'proofs' or rationales for the origin, existence, nature and purpose of the cosmos, in any scientific arena there is always *uncertainty*. What was emphasised in the workshops, however, is the fruitful dialogue and interaction between science and religion that provides a rich conversation for mutual benefit. In this process, there is a continued desire to experience the mystery or the *silence* before something awe-full and great.

In his second presentation, on **"The End of It All: Cosmology and Christian Eschatology in Dialogue,"** Wilkinson surveyed the ecological defects, extinctions of terrestrial agents, explosion of galaxies, end of the sun and the possibility of the universe coming to an end either through death or a 'big crunch'. There is inevitably great fear of the end of life as we know it. The inquiry then proceeded based on the principle question: *What shall Theology say about this?*

It was suggested that theological works being done on ecological or creational themes focus more on the '*past*' – *origins* – and the '*present*', rather than on the '*future end of time*' or '*eschaton*.' Creation Theology as such should not dwell solely on the beginning of the universe and all

things but, rather, on what is to come at the end. In this process, theologians must bear in mind that the end can also be *from within* the universe. Hence the Christian understanding of the resurrection is taken as a mediating premise in any understanding of creation and eschatology. At the end, the theological assumptions of Jurgen Moltmann – God in Creation – can be highlighted as valuable ingredients for a sound theological and scientific approach to eschatology. In this context, God in time and eternity must be seriously considered in theological explorations.

Gregersen Neils explored the topic: **“Theology and the Sciences of Complexity.”** His analytical survey of the concept ‘*complexity*’ from a diversity of disciplines has convinced him that, in everyday life experiences, a balance can only be found through the reduction of complexity. In any complex system, for example, it is difficult to describe its overall behaviour, as it is hard to provide all the necessary details.²

In the whole process, there is always an attempt to look for patterns to define complexity. The attempt has to prove that ‘*absolute complexibility*’ is finally reached. Once an absolute complexibility is accomplished, there is a ‘*re-entry into a new order*’ which is a ‘*complex adaptive order*’ or system. This is stated as the ‘act of compression’ whereby a new order or new world is formed.

This re-entry is a remodification of the old system into a new order. The underlining idea is that, “Complex systems consist of a huge number of constantly interacting elements.... While the material constituents remain the same, the organisation of matter grows exponentially, and does so by self-organisation.”³

After relating the complexity reality to the religious beliefs and experiences of human beings, in the light of ‘*cause and effect theory*’, Gregersen then deals with the topic from a theological perspective. Here, the inquiry focuses on the ‘*interaction rules*’ and the reality of God and divine action in the language of complexity theory. This was exposed further in a presentation on the topic, **“From Anthropic Design to Self-Organised Complexity,”** where he deals with the *theories of design* and

those of *self-organisation* and the *general laws of physics*. Gregersen sees self-organised complexity as the "...apex of divine purpose...(where) otherness is logically implied by the idea of creation."⁴

As such, the 'autonomy' of each respective living system in creation is perceived and taken to be graciously bestowed. He then concludes that Anthropropic Design is a prologue to Self-organisation, and that the two entities are embraced generatively by '*divine generosity*'.

Carolyn King, a biologist from Waikato University, presented on the topic: **"Interpretations of Complexity in Nature: From Teilhard to Maynard Smith."** King firstly challenged Teilhard's anthropocentric theology, rendering it a deterministic scheme where God is constantly absent. She sees an inconsistency in this scheme with contemporary evolutionary theory, which explains its rejection by rational thinkers. The scheme is further charged with a lack of spiritual foundations. The '*complexity*' concept is then approached from a biological viewpoint and discussed in terms of how it can be theologically interpreted.

While it is possible to say that there is an unlimited freedom in nature, the biological evolution must be embraced as part of God's divine purpose in creation. Accordingly, God, in any biological evolution – whether gene-centred or otherwise – is intrinsically directing the process. *God in this process then is the living biological link of all things.* God creates and saves through grace and love, not evolution. King concluded then that "A fully rational, passionate and updated creation theology can, and must, reconcile the unlimited freedom of nature and the unlimited love of God."⁵

In her second presentation, **"Models of Invisible Realities: The Common Thread Between Science and Theology,"** King advocated a different approach to science and religion. The specific focus on what the two disciplines have in common rather than on their differences. This argument was aided by the use of 'symbolic language' and 'imaginative models' to describe physical realities. She attempted to constitute a 'right' direction as a way forward for the science and religion dialogue. 'Right direction' in the coexistence of science and religion means



“progress through successive approximations to the truth.”⁶

While both science and religion are practised by human beings, rejective attitudes of scientists and theologians toward each other on certain issues must be synthesized by a welcoming rational spirit. A realistic understanding of science and faith in this regard presupposes the right paths of living out the truth as Christians in this world. This idea was advocated by the founder and director of CTNS, Robert Russell, in his presentation on the theme, **“Chaos and Complexity: Theological Perspectives.”** Russell posits a “non-interventionist approach to objective special divine action”⁷ as a proper method of dealing with the science and theology discussion. It is inevitable that, between conservatives and liberals in both disciplines, there are occasionally times when ‘*forced options*’ are made.

In religion and science, Russell contends that *divine action* systematically underlies all theological proponents of creation and redemption doctrines.⁸ We can conclusively recognize the ‘*hidden divine actions*’ in creation that work for redemption. Here the resurrection can be seen as a ‘*new emergence*’ or the experience of a transformation in the universe. Such an experience is perceived as a ‘*flip relationship*’ of the divine and the world.

The final session dealt with a search for a new spirituality that befits the theology-science interface. In her presentation on **“A Search for an Australian Spirituality: Finding the Margin In-Between,”** Joan Hendrik provided a religious orientation to the debate by expounding on the sacredness of the land from an indigenous perspective. In her view, the religious ethical behaviours such as respect and responsibility for creation, consciousness of the spirit-presence, values of mutual relationships and belief-systems must be maintained as principle guidelines for the well-being of humans and nature.

Hendrik summed up her argument by referring to the *Dadirri* concept as a way of conceiving life as both science and theology, in all its wholeness. This aboriginal concept of *Dadirri* is an “inner deep listening and quiet, still awareness.... It contemplates wholeness.”⁹ Hence, when

a person or a living being experiences *Dadirri*, that being is made whole. The *Dadirri* quest practically implies that all living beings must have sound theological and scientific commitments to land as divine creation.

The most exciting point in Hendrik's contention is that Christ as Spirit is an Aboriginal archetype. Christ can join the two ways of life (scientific and theological), and that is the fundamental reason why a search for the *Margin In-Between* is absolutely necessary. This centre is the new core of eternity or the existence of the eternal in the temporal. This is an ongoing call and a challenge to the Churches in Australia to work together toward reconciliation in the land and amongst peoples as a means to embrace life holistically. This can only be experienced when people discover the *In-Between Margin*, or the *Christic Point*.

Truth in Science, Truth in Religion

Since the multiplicity of the presenters' perspectives and the voluminous contents of the presentations in this workshop cannot all be accommodated in this piece of writing, we will at this point merely summarise some of the main points.¹⁰ We will briefly address the theme in two main parts. The first section is an attempt to present an overview of the Search for Truth from its religious, philosophical and psychological dimensions. The second part will explore the details of the Truth-Search from empirical scientific disciplines. Drawing a demarcating line between the two does not presuppose a strict dualism of religion and science, but rather seeks the connecting link of both from each other's departing viewpoints.

From the list of presenters, one can note that almost every scientific and religious tradition was represented.¹¹ The nature of presentations evidenced fair and balanced searches for and claims of Truth. It is fair to say at the outset that the outcome of the whole discussion ended with each discipline, while holding to its own truth claims, recognising and respecting the truth/s in others. In other words, those who sought truth through facts, viz-a-viz, real facts (*empirical science*) and those searching through religious ideas (*ousia, geist or spirit*) both have rights to their truth claims. Every human being, irrespective of her/his conviction or



standpoint, has a claim of truth.¹²

Truth in Religious Abstractions¹³

The search for Truth-Claims is dynamic, generative and progressive. It is generative in the sense that concepts and realities in both science and religion in one generation cannot possibly be accepted and rendered as truths in another generation. Thus the fundamental beliefs in the religious traditions are constantly challenged and altered by the contemporary generation of scientists.

In religious or theological discourse, the search for Truths can be achieved in many ways. Gordon D. Kaufman in his presentation, **“On Thinking of God as Serendipitous Creativity,”** for instance, rejects the idea of God-Truth in *traditional anthropomorphic* terms. Instead he proposes ‘creativity’ in “connection with the profoundly serendipitous mystery implied in it”¹⁴ as an alternative for perceiving truth. In so doing, the underlying notion that human beings can know what and who God is, is done away with, while at the same time it is emphasized that God is unknowable, a mystery that values its *serendipitous and creative character*. Approaching the Truth-Claim from a systematic theological viewpoint, it can simply be stated that *God is Foundational-Creativity*. This idea of foundational creativity as a process is purposeful and self-conscious.¹⁵

This idea of God-Truth as a process and a mysterious reality is entertained in common with other religious traditions and thinkers, although they have their own ways of expressing this notion, with some significant points of contrast. In his presentation on **“Science, Truth and Process,”** William E. Kaufmann posited the *creative intellectual potentialities* as a way to think of God and to perceive Truths.¹⁶ This is inherent in Judaism and is reflected in one of his essays entitled; *Evolving God in the Jewish Process Theology*. His conclusions came after a detailed exploration of modernism (as rooted in Descarte’s split view of reality) and postmodernism (sometimes called *constructive* or *revisionary* postmodernism, as inspired by David R. Griffin and John B. Cobb Jr.).¹⁷ For Kaufmann, *creative intelligibility* in postmodernism transcends

the inventions of modernism, and such a process is carried into the future.

Lobsang Phuntsok of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition claims that the human search for Truth can only be obtained through *Self-Negation*. In his presentation, **“Investigating Truth Through Meditation: Removing the Ego From the Process,”** Phuntsok points to human *attachments* as a source of truth distortions. Attachment seduces the self. Self-interest therefore is a hindrance to one’s attainment of Truth or the Extra-Ordinary. The *yoga* experience is therefore beneficial in this search. Phuntsok does not deny the usefulness of the natural sciences. Rather, he sees the role of natural sciences in such a quest as useful devices to unveil the operating principles and the secrets of the realm of Truth.

The Islamic tradition also affirms this respect for the natural sciences, as indicated by the presentation of Mohamed Lazzouni on the theme, **“Truth in Science, Truth in Religion: Through the Eyes of Muslim Philosophers, Theologians and Mystics.”** He asserts that the *Koran* embraces and sums up what it means to be the Truth and to live in that Truth. While the *Koran* intuitively manifests the revealed Truths to the saints, philosophers and mystics, such Truth can also be disclosed practically through wisdom and good behaviour. Moreover, one must respect the moment of contextualisation which is the devotion of the *Self* to one’s own way of life. Truth in this sense is *actualisation*. Hinduism shares the same notion of Truth by eradicating dualistic tendencies of perceiving and realising truths. A holistic view of Truth is welcome, whereby the Scriptures illuminate the fact that all is one. Scientific and religious knowledge in the search for Truths are always intertwined.¹⁸

In the philosophical and psychological traditions, Sissela Bok, in her presentation, **“Truthfulness and Deceit in the Pursuit of Truth,”** attempts to sort out all the possible avenues of finding truths in the coexistence of Deceit and Truthfulness. She contends that the pursuit of truth is always oriented toward the golden rules of moral and religious traditions. Yet people find it difficult to determine whether what they believe in, say and act out is based solely on pure truth or on fiction. One of the challenges posed to religion, for instance, is the constant



preaching about life after death and the resurrection. The truth of this religious teaching is scientifically doubted, yet it is 'true' in a religious framework.

Along similar lines was Wendy Doring's presentation on **"Myth as Lie (Plato, Marx) and Truth (Eliade, Levi-Strauss)."** In her view, the two schools of thought have great implications for human activities, especially their interpretations of 'truth' versus the 'lie'. A myth is a story that is believed although it is something which is not necessarily factually 'true' and socially acceptable. On the other hand, a myth is a narrative that conveys moral truth for guidance. Therefore, myths can be conveyors of truth. What must be upheld in any Truth-Claim is that both dimensions have to be recognised in any quest, be it religious, social, political or whatever. This means, for instance, that, when institutional searches for truths deny one of the dimensions, they may resort to the sphere of imaginative longing for fulfilment and meaning as an alternative.

Truths in Empirical Science

The progressive nature of the truth search encompasses an unending desire of the human mind to venture into the nature of things in time, place and space. As mentioned above, the religious traditions are challenged and altered by the inventions of contemporary sciences. This is often considered as a threat to religious faith. But, as a matter of fact, theological discourse may be meaningfully validated by empirical science. Whereas religion probes to find the purpose and meaning of the universe, science tries to explore the logic of its order and structure.¹⁹

The attempt to build bridges between the findings of natural sciences and religious ideas was evident in most presentations and discussions in the workshop. Scientists normally substantiate their claims by re-reading religious truths from a scientific perspective. In the Biblical account of Creation, for example, Owen Gingerich, an astrophysician, in his presentation, **"Is the Cosmos All There Is: Reflections on Our Place in the Universe,"** challenges the traditional religious understanding by stating that such a narrative should be read as follows:

In the beginning God created Radiation and Ylem (a mixture of protons and neutrons).

And the Ylem was without space or number, and the nucleons were rushing madly upon the face of the deep.

And God said: "Let there be mass two." And there was mass two.

And God saw deuterium, and it was good.

And God said: "Let there be mass three." And there was mass three...²⁰

This account of physics clearly indicates how Biblical or religious truths can be interpreted and validated by the natural sciences.

The inventor of the microwave and the laser, scientist Charles Townes, explored the search for Truth further in his presentation, "**The Sources and Criteria of Scientific Understanding.**" Committed to the opening up of both science and religion in dialogue, he adopts *faith* as the *common breeding ground* in the quest for meaning and Truth. Accordingly, scientific explorations frequently probe into the *unmeasurable* to discover details of the natural and universal laws that govern us. Scientific discoveries randomly disclose new realities which have never been mentioned before. They can also point out possible harms and dangers and how to avoid them before conclusions are drawn.²¹

Above all scientific assumptions, Townes is convinced that there is always an involvement of *aesthetics* in scientific processes.²²

The aesthetic dimension brings scientists and priests together. The correctness of scientific ideas in the scientific community can also strengthen the beliefs of religious communities. The truth acknowledged aesthetically is that there is a *spiritual presence* affecting the world. The human being and the whole cosmos can feel this presence. And since there is a personal relation to this spiritual presence, scientists and theologians then share the responsibility of finding expressions for this Truth.

Deliberations on the search for Truth in science and religion were

harmonized by Arthur Peacock, the recent nobel prize-winner of the Templeton Foundation in his presentation, **“Hearing Before the Jury of Reality.”** Peacock believes that the search for God as Truth and / or Revealer of Truths (from within the framework of creation) can only be made known through and affirmed by scientific findings (cosmic views).²³ In this context, an integrative approach to the quest for Truth-Claims is required of any discipline. This approach is a “surer path from science towards God” and, in fact, “the end of all our exploring.”

Peacock concludes with an affirmation that Truths can only be attained when all creation, regardless of whether it is divine or secular, is envisioned as *Music*. The *Music* metaphor suggests that, while listening to the beat and the rhythm of the cosmic *Music*, the listeners are venturing into the unknown in their quests to know the *Composer* and the *Compositions*. This is where we can find ourselves participating in the Truth as well as in the search for Truth.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Theological Education

An attempt has been made to expose the enriching and provocative experiences of the two advanced workshops on the religion-science interface. As noted, the fruitful results of the studies on the co-existence of religion and science remain a portrait of complexity, diffusion and confusion, as well as excitement and hope. Indeed, the wealth of experiences obtained from these workshops conveys an alarming message for Oceanic communities and churches.

The Oceanic communities are yet to come of age, particularly in relation to the scientific and religious revolutions. Given the mostly rejective attitudes from the side of religion, it is time that the unfolding dramas of scientific developments are acknowledged and accepted as an integral part of religious faith. In postmodernity, religion or religious people cannot rely on ‘old’ conceptions of faith alone, ignoring the impact of science. Scientific revolutions have much to offer in nurturing faith when rightly appropriated. In this regard, it is absolutely necessary to make certain recommendations for theological education in Oceania.

The eruption of scientific revolutions is a no-going-back phenomenon. It is coming as a new current in Oceania which can either be destructive or constructive. In order for Oceanic communities to have a proper orientation to this phenomenon, workshops and training on scientific issues must be taken up by religious and theological institutions and disciplines.

To date there is minimal participation of Oceanians in discussions on the religion-science interface. Since much of these deliberations are advocated by the so-called technologically advanced societies, Oceanic communities are in most cases discouraged either by the lack of human resources (experts) or scientific know-how and experimentation, but also by the lack of funds. However, these disadvantages should not hinder the attempt to engage in these deliberations. Exposure to advanced workshops of the kind described in this article could foster not only an interest in learning more about the coexistential dialogue but also a new spirituality that embraces both theology and science as undeniably interlinked. Hence the participation of more Oceanians in these discussions is greatly recommended.

Besides exposure to workshops and trainings held outside the region, it is recommended that it is time for the local theological institutions to embrace scientific studies in their course content and curricula. This is one way whereby the religion-science dialogue can be apprehended and viewed as a medium through which faith can be enriched. This can then be channelled to the members of local communities whose knowledge of scientific revolutions is still peripheral.

Furthermore, the regional institutional bodies such as SPATS could advocate for the religion-science interface by planning regional workshops, seminars and short-term training on several related issues. SPATS can be a catalyst and an educator in the sense that the local theological institutions and communities can benefit from the continual sharing of religious and scientific findings and debates. The workshops could not only provide good opportunities for learning exposures but also create new networks for further dialogue on critical issues confronting the region, ranging from genetic engineering to global



warming to the treatment and cure of new diseases.

Religion and Science can be viewed as being in conflict with each other. But it is the ultimate role of the human being to explore all implications of the reality that both inhabit some territory of Truth, if not the Absolute Truth.

Notes

- ¹ The Advanced Workshops were organised by the Centre for Theology and Natural Sciences (CTNS) which is centrally based at Berkeley University in California. The CTNS programmes are internationally promoted by a network of known scholars, universities and institutes, collaborating through a series of regional workshops and consultations aiming at building dialogue between religions and sciences.
- ² What is needed, therefore, is to: *identify the variability* of constituent elements of a system, then *discern the relativity* of the elements – in this case, *selectivity* is necessary – *algorithmic* and more disordered or incomprehensible complex systems. Sometimes there are also *pseudo-random sequences* in the expressions of complexity. The conclusion is an attempt to find a sound *mathematical definition* for complex systems.
- ³ Neils H. Gregersen, "Theology and the Sciences of Complexity," Workshop Presentation, Australian National University, Canberra, 26 January, 2002.
- ⁴ Gregersen, "From Anthropoc Design to Self-Organized Complexity," Workshop Presentation, Australian National University, Canberra, 26 January, 2002.
- ⁵ Carolyn King, "Interpretation of Complexity in Nature: Teilhard to Maynard Smith," Workshop Presentation, Australian National University. Canberra, 26 January, 2002.
- ⁶ Carolyn King, "Models of Invisible Reality: The Common Thread Between Science and Theology," Workshop Presentation, Canberra, 27 January, 2002.
- ⁷ Robert Russell, "Chaos and Complexity: Theological Perspectives," Workshop Presentation, Australian National University, Canberra, 27 January, 2002.
- ⁸ Robert Russell outlines the advantages and the disadvantages of chaos and complexity, quantum mechanics and cosmology. He then poses some critiques related to the irrelevancy of these in relation to theological themes such as the bodily resurrection, eschatology and the big bang cosmology.
- ⁹ Joan Hendrik, "A Search for an Australian Spirituality: Finding the Margin In-Between," Workshop Presentation, Australian National University, Canberra, 28 January, 2002.
- ¹⁰ The main thrust of this section is based on the author's overview and perceptions of the major presentations and discussions in the Theology and Natural Science

- Interface Workshop at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- ¹¹ Owen Gingerich (Astrophysician - Harvard University), "Truth in Science: Proof and Persuasion"; Gordon Kaufmann (Theologian - Harvard Divinity School), "Theology and the Sciences: An Integrative Approach"; Sissela Bok (Psychologist and Philosopher - Harvard University), "Truthfulness and the Pursuit of Truth"; William Kaufmann (Process Theologian - Jewish Theological Seminary - Pennsylvania), "Science, Truth and Process"; Michael Shermer (Psychologist - University of California Press), "Why People Believe in God: An Empirical Answer to a Deep Question"; Wendy Doniger (Religious Philosopher - Harvard University), "Myth as Lie (Plato, Marx) and Truth (Iliade, Levi-Strauss)"; Charles Townes (Scientist - California Institute of Technology), "The Sources and Criteria of Scientific Understanding"; Gerald Gabrielse (Physician - Harvard University), "God of Quantum Mechanics and Antimatter"; Lobsang Phuntsok (Tibetan Buddhist - Brookline Centre), "Investigating Truth through Meditation: Removing the Ego from the Process"; Francis X. Clooney (Theologian - Boston College), "Truth, Religious Truth, and Science in Traditional India"; Susan Pauker (Pediatrist - Harvard University), "In the Beginning: Genesis, Genes, and Genomics"; Mohamed Lazzouni (Religious Leader and Physicist - Jesuit Institute, Boston College), "Truth in Science, Truth in Religion: Through the eyes of Muslim Philosophers, Theologians and Mystics"; Wesley Wildman (Religious Philosopher - Harvard Divinity School), "A Pragmatist Philosophical Framework for Negotiating Competing Truth Claims"; Alyssa Goodman (Astronomer - Harvard University), "Order, Chaos and the Space Between the Stars"; Arthur Peacocke (Scientist and Theologian - Cambridge University), "Hearing Before the Jury of Reality".
 - ¹² The truth claims range from the Genesis creation story to genes and genetic manipulation, from lie to deceit as truth to believed truths, from truths conveyed by myths to those revealed by scientific explorations of the earth below and above, and from human artistic capabilities to the divine mystery in the cosmic order.
 - ¹³ 'Abstractions' here refers specifically to disciplines such as psychology, philosophy and theology in their pure abstract or spiritual conceptions.
 - ¹⁴ Gordon D. Kaufman, "On Thinking of God as Serendipitous Creativity." Workshop Presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge, 29 June, 2002.
 - ¹⁵ Gordon Kaufman. Accordingly, "There is a powerful, awe-inspiring creativity manifest in our world - and indeed, in ourselves: the new, the novel, the unforeseeable, the previously unheard of, break forth roundabout us and in our midst; and human life continues to be sustained from beyond itself."
 - ¹⁶ William D. Kaufman, "Science, Truth and Process." Workshop Presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge. 30 June, 2002.
 - ¹⁷ Humanistic reason, an invention of Modernism, empirically exposes Divine Truths. The idea of God in this regard tends to be stagnant, limited and non-productive. As such, Kaufman sees the utilization of *creative intelligibility* as a way to capture the idea of a transcendental God that is always in process.
 - ¹⁸ Francis X. Clooney, "Knowledge and Religious Knowledge in the Hindu Indian Traditions." Workshop Presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge. 01 July,



2002.

- ¹⁹ Charles H. Townes, "The Sources and Criteria of Scientific Understanding," Workshop Presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge. 30 June, 2002. See also, "Understanding of Logic and Uncertainties in Science and Religion," in *Science and Theology: The New Consonance*, Ted Peters, ed. (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1997), 43-55.
- ²⁰ Owen Gingerich, "Is the Cosmos All There Is: Reflections on Our Place in the Universe." Workshop Presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge. 29 June, 2002.
- ²¹ Charles H. Townes, "The Sources and Criteria of Scientific Understanding," Workshop Presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge. 30 June, 2002.
- ²² See Townes' conclusion in his essay, "Understanding of Logic and Uncertainties in Science and Religion," in *Science and Theology: The New Consonance*, Ted Peters, ed. (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1997), 43-55.
- ²³ Arthur Peacock, "Hearing Before the Jury of Reality," Workshop Presentation, Harvard University, Cambridge. 03 July, 2002.

Book Review

Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere, VANUA: TOWARDS THE THEOLOGY OF THE LAND. (Suva : USP, IPS, 2002)

Reviewed by Rusiate Tuidrakula

Tuwere's *Vanua: Towards Theology of the Place* presents a critical review of some of the important issue confronting the land or *vanua* in some of our islands of the Oceania. This book is by and large his doctoral thesis *Rediscovering and Making Sense of the Vanua* at the Australia National University in 1992.

In a classical approach, Tuwere awakens the theology of liberation in the *vanua* in relation to those who live within the gap and the marginalized. In his theological discourse, Tuwere interprets the *vanua* in the context of geographical population and its distribution including its social factors and political situations.

Tuwere captured the Fijian sense of place and the experience gained from the early European contacts. It was a period of conception (*kunekunetaki*) whereas the ideology of the *tauvei* of common descent, faith and interest, was used against the outside threat. Having described the ongoing understanding of the *vanua*, he introduced the Fijian life and its community.

Tuwere's theological reflection and the significance of the *vanua* addresses the question as why place must be seen as an important player in the interpretation of human history which very often places human beings at the centre. Tuwere called it *mata* (face) primarily a quest for a form of the community in Trinitarian terms (*vanua* , *lotu* , *matanitu*) that allows for learning from the past experience and restates the function of the Godhead.

He also describes *mana* (energy, power) where the connection between the ancestor god, man and other objects becomes the carrier of *mana* itself. *Mana* also for power and achievement was regarded as a spirituality



of powerlessness. Its basic meaning has to do with life and its power is provided by the gods in relation to the *vanua*.

Tuwere also uses the 'ear' in the speaking hearing relation of the speaker and the listener (*veirogorogoci*) of the *vosa* (word). It focused on the identity in the in relation to the conflict situation in the multicultural Fiji. It identifies new modes of speaking –hearing experience suitable for the multicultural context.

Tuwere draws his work in a well balanced manner from materials in Scriptures, and from a broad spectrum of theologians. Interestingly, the using of the tradition and myths has captured the *vanua* in its meaning in the Fijian society as means of livelihood, calendar of time, assuring identity and links to the ancestors.

In this book Tuwera is clearly addressing the Oceania peoples of a specific sort, the leaders of communities (intellectual, economic, political etc) concerning the regional discussion on the otherness. It is in this theological discussion of the *vanua* in the previously colonial era, and now in the multi-ethnicity of the others, that we find the lineage of our *vanua* as being politicised after the pangs of independence.

There are flaws in the theological construction that allows deliberate affirmations of *exclusiveness* though Tuwera theologises well on the neighbour question. In a multifaceted country like Fiji, there are differences in the view of the land depending on one's belief system. Undoubtedly, the hierarchical order exists in the social system which conforms to Tuwera's Trinitarian solemnity of the *vanua* (land), *lotu* (church), *matanitu* (state) indirectly recapitulate the division of the 'haves' and the 'have not' thus cement the face of social divisions.

Tuwere applied his theology in the religious practice of 'speaking and listening.' Putting Christ as the sole answer is far from realization because of the missing link of the diversity of religions in our multicultural society. In reality the missing word is *inclusiveness* of the otherness in this listening relationship not only listening but to be included.

However, Tuwera finds Jesus Christ as the centre force of salvation so

as to include those in the periphery of the society; the neighbour should be included in local social life and be functional in the boundaries between people. Perhaps the silence and stillness under the word of God is for the oppressors including our social system that shapes our belief system. Only then we can feel the sense of belongingness in a kava bowl, a working place, schools, ceremonial rituals social gathering or even under a palm tree of God's rule over the *vanua*.



Book Review

K. Barr, *RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION: SCANDAL AND DIVISION IN OUR HUMAN FAMILY*. Suva: WCC and ECREA, 2002.

Reviewed by Kafoa Solomone

This is a useful little booklet on the topic of racism and discrimination. It is easy reading but quite informative also.

The first chapter re-tells historical cases of well known individuals who lived, suffered and struggled against, and even died because of, racism and/or discrimination; the stories of Anne Frank under the Nazi, of Abraham Lincoln and the abolition of slavery in the United States, Mahatma Gandhi's fight against the British colonialism in India, Rosa Park's courageous breaking the segregation law that sparked the struggle which eventuated in the abolition of segregation in the southern states of the US. The last case told is that of Nelson Mandela and the struggle of the black against Apartheid policies of the South African government. A definition of the frequently used terms in the discussion of the topic is given in chapter 2. This is helpful for those who may not be too familiar with some of the terms used, e.g. xenophobia, ethnocentric. Chapter 3 deals briefly with the omnipresence of racism in modern societies. Chapter 4 with discrimination in its plurality of forms: in race, gender, categories of people, religion, economic status, and even in regards the environment. This is the first half of the booklet.

The second half deals with the different agents of change in the search for solution for this problem or at least a hope for the role that these bodies, institutions, and religion play. A proposal for alleviating the problem is to be done at the grassroots through education, conscientization, and on the national level through legislation. On the personal level, sinfulness of racism is to be acknowledged, confessed and authentic reconciliation sought through the four basic issues of truth, justice, mercy, and peace. A further glossary of helpful terms

frequently used in the booklet. This is followed by a list of suggested activities for the booklet's target "young people in schools, youth groups, and seminary students in Fiji".

The list of activities can be used profitably at different levels by any of the groups especially in the schools.

An appendix with the list of human rights from the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination is given at the end. This is also helpful to know the basic rights that are denied in any form of racial discrimination.

If this little booklet is made available to and is utilised by its intended targets, it will go a long way and in the long term to address the problem of racism and instil the principles of racial harmony among the youth who are the future of the country.



Book Launch

Two books were launched in Suva by ECREA on 5th March, 2003 at the Pacific Theological College *Fale*. The Fiji Country Case Study for the World Council of Churches 'Project 21', published under the title Christianity, Poverty and Wealth at the Start of the 21st Century – Chantelle A. Khan & Kevin J. Barr msc, ECREA 2003 was launched together with the World Council of Churches publication Christianity, Poverty and Wealth – findings of 'Project 21', Michael Taylor, SPCK 2003.

Introductory Remarks at the launching

The Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy, ECREA, was formed out of the Fiji Council of Churches Research Group in 2001. As the name indicates, ECREA is involved in searching out the reasons for, and the background to the social issues which ought to be faced by the Christian Churches. I say 'ought to be', and this is where Education and Advocacy enter the picture. Research is not an end in itself; it needs to be followed up by action. In alerting the Churches to the needs and problems in society, ECREA seeks to stir the Churches into addressing these issues constructively.

The voice of ECREA is the voice of the prophet. Like all people of all times, it is a voice we would rather not hear. It makes us feel uncomfortable. It pricks at our conscience.

The Social Concerns programme of ECREA which is responsible for the publication of the Fiji Case Study on poverty is one of several areas in which ECREA is involved in this prophetic role. Poverty is one area of the Social Concerns programme.

But poverty is not new. There have been reports and case studies before now produced both by Government and civil society. Long ago the Hebrew prophets, - Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah – all spoke against religion that tries to satisfy God with worship and sacrifices without

accompanying social justice. In our days, money, time and effort are sacrificed to produce voluminous reports which are then laid reverently upon some shelf. Issues are raised. What action follows? What changes are made to bring greater justice?

Address at the launching

Dr. Uili Feleterika Nokise, Principal of the Pacific Theological College, gave the following address and launched the books.

WCC & ECREA Publications

I am humbled by the privilege and honour extended by ECREA to officially launch the WCC Publication *Christianity, Poverty and Wealth* and their Fiji Case Study under a similar title. The historical reasons that gave birth to the two studies are/(have been) adequately covered by the previous speaker and also in the forewords of the publication, likewise their contents and findings. What I want to share are some general remarks regarding the significance of the two studies for the church and society worldwide and for Fiji in particular.

First, the studies have highlighted the huge burden of poverty and associated social problems on people, the heavy cost of democracy to the people and the irresponsible managing of resources.

Secondly, the studies have revealed a tendency amongst the well to do section of society to close their eyes, ears and minds to the call for justice from those suffering under such conditions. The Fijian case study has exposed the real position, opened up the issue of responsible statistical gathering and created public means of monitoring the crisis. In a sense people directly affected are no longer sidelined. They are part of the real picture now. We now have personal stories rather than just statistical outlines – the stories tell of fears and anxiety of parents not able to feed or house their children, of their inability to access medical help because they cannot afford fees – children cannot go to school because they cannot pay their school fees. All these are linked to the fact that many



are deprived of a job, a house or an adequate income.

Thirdly, the studies dispel certain myths which politicians, businessmen and businesswomen, church leaders have conveniently perpetuated not only to hide their reluctance to pursue a meaningful programme to combat it, but also to safeguard their position of being in control. The myth is related to the whole notion that poverty is simply the result of forces beyond their control. The findings of the studies have clearly indicated that this is not only unacceptable – it is quite untrue. Poverty can be stopped. The real obstacle is political will. It will continue to be so unless there is a “national” will.

Fourthly, the studies highlight a simple truth often lost in the intensity of critical analysis namely, poverty is about people. The Case study in Fiji is to be commended for revealing this naked truth. While statistics may prove the existence of poverty, they also hide its human face. They do not expose agonizing compromises Fiji’s poor have to make. The choice between adequate food or adequate housing, not both, and sometimes neither. The figures conceal a parent’s anguish at the realization that a sick child has to suffer without the best of medical care.

I want to pay tribute to the courage of those who told their stories to the researchers of ECREA. I hope we and all in Fiji have now gained better understanding regarding the human face of poverty. We are reminded that life for the poor is a constant struggle – the plight of the unemployed, the homeless, and the low-income trigger off all kinds of social and psychological problems.

Finally, the studies highlighted the need for churches to take seriously, the socio-economic – ethnic of the Gospel. Perhaps more to the point is the nature and mission of the church in our society today – and the kind of theology it is promoting. The studies seem to be offering a direct challenge to the church to address issues of injustice, of unrighteousness, of inequality that riddle its structures and processes. Unless this is done, - its theology has no bearing in real life situations, encountered by its parishioners.

The studies seem to be challenging all of us in church and society to re-examine our souls; to ask ourselves as to whether we have a conscience that is more than superficial? Is anything sacred to us anymore? Do we have a collective set of values that is significantly intact to give us the social and political will, the theological will to address the issue of poverty, wealth and poverty?

The case to eliminate poverty involves the structuring of effective programmes to distribute wealth and other resources equitably. For the churches whose conscience ought to be sharper than any other institution – the studies offer a direct challenge to act more like the Good Samaritan and less like the priest and the Levite who had important institutional reasons to avoid suffering of another human being. For the governments society need structural, national, social and economic programmes that would take people out of poverty.

The value of these two publications for the world and the church is immense.

I congratulate WCC and ECREA for such sacred offerings – and in so doing, officially launch the two publications. Christianity, Poverty and Wealth by Michael Taylor – published by WCC; and Christianity, Poverty and Wealth at the start of the 21st Century – Fiji Country Case Study by ECREA.

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NOTE These two books are available from ECREA, GPO Box 15473, SUVA, FIJI.

Phone (679) 330-7588 Fax (679) 331-1248 Email: respro@ecrea.org.fj



Book Review

Robert Day McAmis MALAY MUSLIMS The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia Wm. B Eerdman Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA 2002

Reviewed by Tessa Mackenzie

The rapid expansion of Islam worldwide means that any book that can deepen our understanding of Islam and this phenomenon is worth Christian study. This little book, written by a Christian with long years of experience in and study of the religious environment in the islands of Southeast Asia, is a very interesting study of how Islam became firmly entrenched in this part of the world, so that now Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world.

The book gives a history of the religious penetration by Islam and Christianity in the Southeast Asian islands and is an illuminating commentary on both faith traditions. For the Muslim, his faith is his life and culture, so that the Muslim merchants, with their simple religious practices which were an integral part of their daily life, brought Islam to Southeast Asia without missionary zeal. Islam spread peacefully and gently to the region over a long period of many centuries. When merchants came from Christian countries, their lifestyle did not reflect Christianity. These merchants from different European countries, coming centuries after the Muslims, were intent on gaining control of the spice trade and even fought among themselves such was their greed.

When the Muslim traders came they brought an understanding of equality of all people. This won favour in an area where Buddhism and Hinduism with its caste system had preceded it. The traders from the Christian countries, when they arrived, treated the people of the islands like slaves. As a result their coming stimulated the spread of Islam. When Christian missionaries came following the traders they brought the new religion with force and uncompromising attitudes; whereas Islam had adapted to and even adopted some of the indigenous

animistic beliefs. In other words Islam contextualized very naturally.

Now, the modern revival of Islam worldwide is affecting the Muslims in this part of the world and the book gives a detailed analysis of this as a guide to a Christian response. McAmis has some excellent advice on the benefits of Christian/Muslim inter-religious dialogue. He urges Christians to realize that the command to love our neighbour as demonstrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan comes before the great commission to go and make disciples. A truly Christian approach to others is not through antagonistic confrontation but through understanding and loving service.

McAmis provides an extensive bibliography for those who wish to pursue further study of the Southeast Asian religious scene.

Although the topic of this book – Malay Muslims – may not seem to be of direct concern to Pacific Islanders, the increasing opening up of the world through globalization means that people in once distant lands are now our not-so-distant neighbours and we are being exposed more and more to different ideas. Pacific theologians would do well to read this book as a background to understanding the pluralistic society which is already the reality for many of our island nations.



Pacific Journal of Theology

Policy Statement

The Pacific Journal of Theology is published twice yearly by the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools. It seeks to stimulate theological thinking and writing by Christians living in or familiar with the South Pacific, and to share these reflections with church and theological education communities, and with all who want to be challenged to reflect critically on their faith in changing times. Opinions and claims made by contributors to the Journal are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board or the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools.

The Editorial Board welcomes various kinds of writing which express an emerging Pacific theology. These may include:

- Original articles in the theological disciplines;
- Articles relating theological thinking to Pacific cultures, contemporary issues, and other academic disciplines;
- Helpful material for pastors and church workers (liturgical, pastoral, educational);
- Artistic expressions of the Christian faith (poetry, visual art, music);
- Notes and reviews of books which are relevant for Pacific Christians;



- Information about ongoing research in the theological disciplines in the Pacific.

Notes for Contributors

The Editorial Board will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard and in keeping with the overall policy of this Journal. It is recommended that articles should be approximately 4,320 words long. The Editorial Board reserves the right to accept or reject, and to edit all articles submitted for publication. Poetry, photographs, black and white drawings are also welcome. Articles should be clearly typed in double spacing on one side of the paper only. Any sources quoted or paraphrased should be listed in endnotes and a bibliography at the end of the article, including author, title, city, publisher and date of publication. Please include brief autobiographical data.

Language

The Editorial Board will accept articles in French and Pacific languages with an abstract in the English language.



South Pacific Association of Theological Schools

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